Commentary

July–August 2008

Are We Winning the War on Terror?

Max Boot

How Not to Repair the World
Hillel Halkin

Why Iraq Was Inevitable
Arthur Herman

Banger Finds Out—A Story
Kelly Cherry

Hugo Chávez's Jewish Problem
Travis Pantin

The Iranian Shell Game
Emanuele Ottolenghi

Keeping Them Out, Letting Them In
Peter Wehner

America Sorts Itself
Terry Teachout

Books in Review
Daniel Casse • Edward Azlant • Jonathan Foreman
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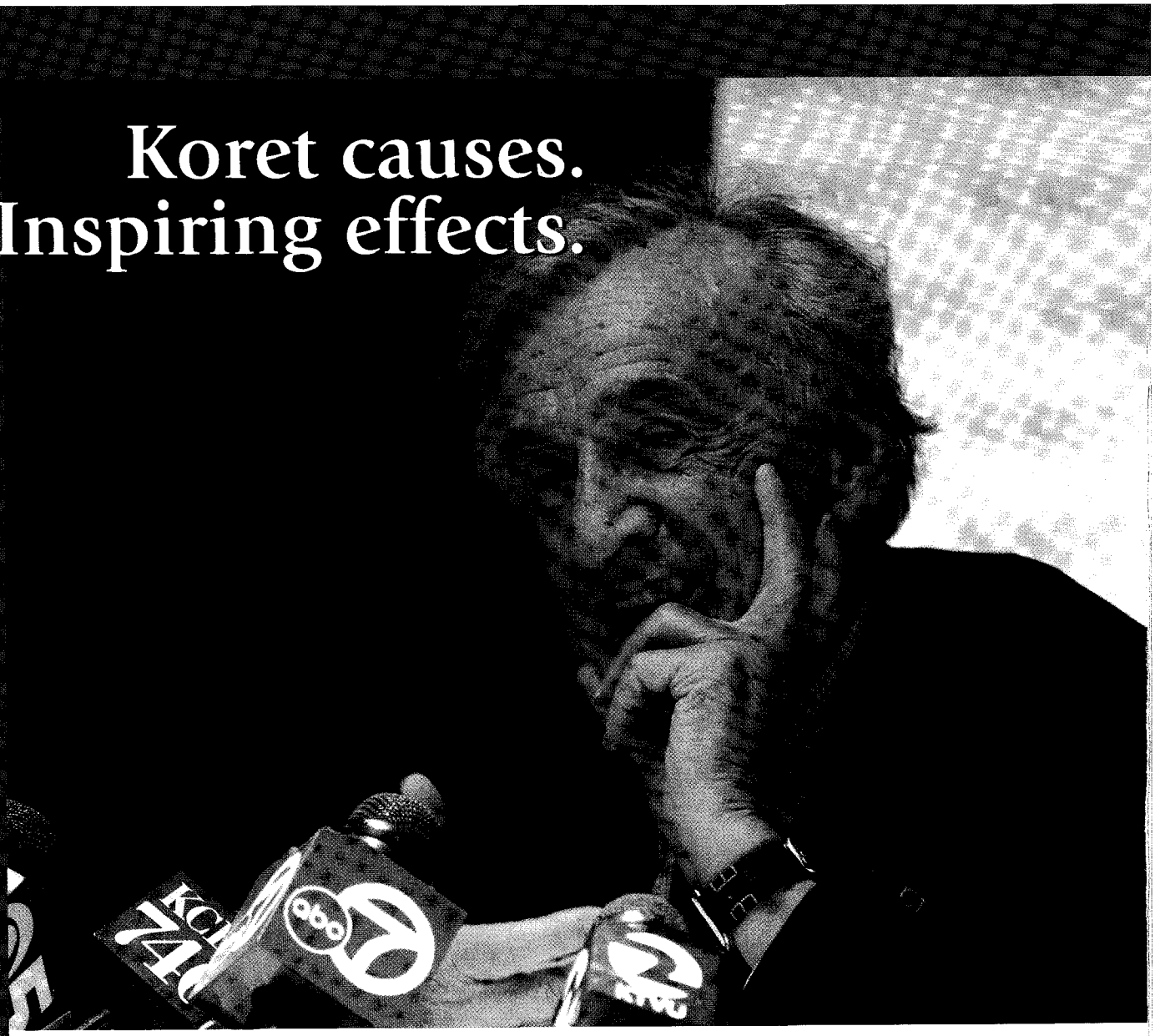

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Commentary
July-August 2008

Letters from Readers

Beyond the Surge

To the Editor:

Peter D. Feaver is certainly correct that by the middle of 2005, a policy redirection was necessary for the United States in Iraq ["Anatomy of the Surge," April]. And indeed, the surge appears to have helped America achieve its previously asserted goal of reconciling Sunnis and Shiites and integrating both communities into the Iraqi armed forces so that American troops could stand down. In this respect, the surge has bought time, but it has also left the ball largely in the court of the factious Iraqis, who for their part appear to be squandering the political opportunity provided by the improvements in security.

In other words, the U.S. has helped bolster various centers of armed power beyond the control of the central government without simultaneously effecting a political bargain among Iraqi leaders. But American troops cannot long remain as the lynchpin keeping antagonistic groups from reengaging in civil and sectarian war. The political gains of the surge still fall well short of anything that promises to bring lasting stability to the country. When American support for Sunni "Awakening" forces (i.e., militiamen formerly hostile to the U.S. who have turned against al Qaeda) tails off, the Sunnis may not be as helpful as they are now. If Moqtada al-Sadr reemerges to engage in armed conflict, the U.S. will be back at square one.

In short, the surge should not be seen as an end in and of itself. There must be a strategy for building on its gains. Few seem to realize how tenuous they are.

Jason Hillman
Tel Aviv, Israel

To the Editor:

Peter D. Feaver fails to recognize that the real change in strategy that has succeeded in Iraq has nothing to do with the surge of troops. General David Petraeus negotiated cease-fires with militia groups in Anbar and Diyala and with Moqtada al-Sadr; that is why violence has gone down. We can draw down our troops now and eventually pull them out completely if we continue to bring Iraqi insurgents into the system. You cannot win a war until you settle on a peace agreement. You cannot kill all the terrorists: you must stop their recruitment.

General Petraeus seems to recognize this, and has a much more subtle approach than Mr. Feaver allows. The Iraqi security forces will not crumble if we pull out—that is a scare tactic from those who want permanent U.S. bases in Iraq. Ultimately, our presence there is part of the problem and our responsible pullout is a key to the solution.

The next President must recognize that Iraq is not going to be the next Bosnia. It will continue for a long time to see occasional bombings and a steady if slowed stream of American casualties. The American people will not accept this, and we must therefore have an exit strategy. An 85,000-man force is not politically sustainable for a McCain or an Obama presidency. An Obama presidency will lead to a gradual reduction in violence and an American victory once we are pulled out. A McCain presidency will lead to a continuing cycle of bombings and deaths, eventually leading to a congressional abandonment of funding and a precipitous withdrawal—and defeat. McCain cannot win in Iraq because he has no exit strategy.

David Shackleford
Framingham, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

Peter D. Feaver's article illustrates the problem with our public discourse on the surge and its supposed success. He assumes without

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any causal evidence that the recent decrease in the number of attacks and deaths in Iraq has been the result of the surge just because the improvements coincided with the increase in the number of American combat brigades. What Mr. Feaver fails to acknowledge is that starting in late 2006 and continuing through 2007, American commanders shifted their strategy to focus more on air strikes. In 2007 alone, the number of American air strikes increased fourfold.

MATTHEW BELLER
Bronx, New York

PETER D. FEAVER writes:

I thank Jason Hillman, David Shackleford, and Matthew Beller for their letters. Collectively, these correspondents make two points that I fully accept, and that I accepted in my article:

• The gains of the "surge" strategy are not irreversible, and depend on the Iraqis making wise decisions in the coming years, particularly with respect to resolving political differences peacefully. The surge's success could also be reversed by bad decisions on the part of American commanders or politicians. We have bought an opportunity for a better outcome in Iraq, not a certainty of that outcome.

• It is also true that the gains of the surge are not due merely to the increase in the number of American boots on the ground but to a host of other strategic elements, including the pursuit of the Sunni tribal "Awakening." As I wrote in my article: "Each of these labels [for the new strategy] had the unfortunate side-effect of obscuring the many other changes contained in the new strategy and focusing attention exclusively on the increase in military troops—certainly the gutsiest element in terms of our domestic politics but by no means the only important one." For a more detailed look at the social, political, and diplomatic arrows in our strategic quiver, interested readers may consult the 2007 "Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review," downloadable from the White House website.

Still, it is a mistake to argue that the surge of reinforcements has been irrelevant. General Petraeus has said that the surge allowed the coalition to capitalize on the tribal awakening more rapidly than would have otherwise been possible. Independent observers like Stephen Biddle of the Council on Foreign Relations have noted that the surge allowed us to make more credible promises of protection to former insurgents who came in from the cold. It requires a willful suspension of disbelief to pretend that we could have expected the same results in Iraq if, for instance, congressional Democrats had succeeded in blocking the surge in 2007.

As for the way forward from here, I support President Bush's decision (based on General Petraeus's advice) to end the surge of troops while pressing ahead with the rest of the strategy. It appears as of this writing that the situation on the ground in Iraq may even allow for some further reductions in our combat presence.

If we want to achieve a decent outcome in Iraq, however, such reductions should not be based on the domestic American political calendar. Those who suggest otherwise end up arguing themselves into logical contradictions, as Mr. Shackleford does when he claims that Iraqi forces would not crumble if a President Obama were to initiate a pullout of U.S. troops but a precipitous withdrawal leading to defeat would be our fate if a President McCain were to continue General Petraeus's phased transition.

What is Man . . .

TO THE EDITOR:

David Berlinski gets everything right in "The God of the Gaps" [April], and is even touching and poetic in his affirmation of the miracle of our existence. His view is akin to that of Einstein and other great scientists who have seen their quest for truth as the search for traces of God in the physical universe.

Mr. Berlinski's treatment of Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-founder with Darwin of the theory of evolution by natural selection, is sensitive and accurate. It is indeed a mystery why our species, which spent most of its existence hunting game and gathering fruit and nuts, was pre-adapted for higher mathematics, fine art, and modern physics. Evolutionary theory has no explanation for this. Of course, it could be simply a fortuitous exaption (that is, adaptation for one purpose deployed for a different purpose), but many will find this to be too convenient a non-explanation.

Mr. Berlinski's treatment of modern science as the locus of modern-day miracles is brilliant and insightful. It is simply a shame that those untrained in the natural sciences, especially physics, cannot see the stunning, improbable, and yet necessary structure of physical reality. It is difficult indeed not to see the hand of God in quantum mechanics and the exogenously given parameters of particle physics.

Insightful, too, is Mr. Berlinski's interpretation of the evolution of vision. The fact that vision has evolved many times in many species shows clearly that vision is the product of a wholly natural process. But actually seeing *and being conscious of* the world is the true miracle of vision, and cannot be reduced to the interaction of neuronal signals.

One of the most egregious arguments of the atheistic crowd is that when you "boil things down" to basics, we humans are just apes with clothes. Thus, for instance, Homer's *Iliad* is, at base, just an elaborate primate mating game. "What is essential about the boiling process," Berlinski wisely notes, "is not what has been distilled, but what has evaporated—namely, everything that is of interest in the *Iliad*."

I look forward to reading Mr. Berlinski's new book, *The Devil's Delusion*, on the pretensions of "scientific atheists." But while they deserve to be criticized roundly for suggesting that modern science can exhaustively explain the universe and our place in it, they are far less dangerous than the "intelligent-design" crowd, which denies modern evolutionary biology altogether and holds that our ruminations about the metaphysics of the universe are "alternative scientific hy-

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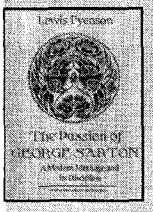
Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society



The Passion of George Sarton: A Modern Marriage and Its Discipline

Lewis Pyenson

George Sarton animated the discipline of history of science in America. This monograph, the first full-length study of Sarton's life and work, traces his youth and education in Ghent, Belgium, and his stormy marriage to the talented English artist Mabel Elwes. It follows George and Mabel Sarton in their path from idealistic refugees fleeing the invasion of Belgium in 1914 to destitute intellectuals at Harvard University. For half a century, history of science as an academic specialty owed much to George Sarton's visions and anxieties, especially as they were expressed in his marriage. Mabel Sarton sustained his enterprise and contributed to its form, which included parts of socialism, pacifism, aesthetics, and faith.

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Renaissance Vision from Spectacles to Telescopes

Vincent Ilardi

The monograph deals with the history of eyeglasses from their invention in Italy ca. 1286 to the appearance of the telescope three centuries later. Eyeglasses served an important technological function at both the intellectual and practical level. A subthesis of the book is that Florence, rather than Venice, seems to have dominated the commercial market for eyeglasses during the fifteenth century, when the ability to grind convex lenses for various levels of presbyopia and the ability to grind concave lenses for the correction of myopia occurred.

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The Temple of Night at Schönau: Architecture, Music, and Theater in a Late Eighteenth-Century Viennese Garden

John A. Rice

Between 1796 and 1800 Baron Peter von Braun transformed his estate into an English-style landscape park. The most celebrated building was the Temple of Night, a domed rotunda accessible only through a meandering rockwork grotto. Only the ruins of the Temple survive, and this book brings it back to life by assembling the many descriptions of it by early nineteenth-century eyewitnesses.

Vol. 258 - $70 ISBN-13: 978-0-87169-258-0

The Library of Benjamin Franklin

Edwin Wolf 2nd and Kevin J. Hayes

(Joint publication of the American Philosophical Society and the Library Company of Philadelphia)

Benjamin Franklin's library, the largest and best private library at the time of his death in 1790, was sold by his grandson and subsequently sold again. None of the catalogues of the collection survive. In 1956, Edwin Wolf discovered the unique shelfmarks Franklin used to identify his books. His work to reconstruct a catalogue of the library was unfinished at the time of his death. Kevin J. Hayes took up the work as the tercentenary of Franklin's birth approached. Everything found to date, close to 4,000 entries, is compiled here.

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Transactions of the American Philosophical Society

The Making of a Romantic Icon: The Religious Context of Friedrich Overbeck's *Italia und Germania*

Lionel Gossman

WINNER OF THE JOHN FREDERICK LEWIS AWARD FOR 2007

Friedrich Overbeck's *Italia and Germania* (1811-1828) is a well-known image in its native Germany, where it is seen as an allegory of the perennial longing of German artists and poets for the beauty and harmony of the land "where the lemon tree blooms." The contextualization of *Italia and Germania* in this essay reveals a painting that is an emblem not only of the sisterhood of North and South, the early German and early Italian traditions in art, but of the general Romantic longing for reconciliation, reunion, and the overcoming of historical alienation.

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Beyond Combat: Essays in Military History in Honor of Russell F. Weigley

Edward G. Longacre and Theodore J. Zeman, editors

"The 'new military history' is new in its concern for military history as a part of the whole of history, not isolated from the rest, for the military as a projection of society at large, for the relationships of the soldier and the state, for military institutions and military thought." So wrote Russell F. Weigley, one of the most accomplished and respected military historians of the latter half of the twentieth century. *Beyond Combat* includes a brief biography of Dr. Weigley by the editors, an introduction by Dennis E. Showalter, essays by nine of Dr. Weigley's PhDs, and a select bibliography of his work.

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Dashkova: A Life of Influence and Exile Alexander Woronzoff-Dashkoff

A woman of letters and the first woman member of the American Philosophical Society, Ekaterina Romanovna Dashkova (née Vorontsova) was appointed director of the Academy of Sciences by Catherine II and she founded and became president of the Russian Academy. She was a leading figure in eighteenth-century Russian culture as she strove to institute reforms, to adapt and apply the ideas of the Enlightenment, and to establish new approaches to the education of Russia's youth. Alexander Woronzoff-Dashkoff is Professor of Russian language and literature at Smith College in Massachusetts. Born in Renon, Italy, he received a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California.

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The Tintype in America, 1856-1880

Janice G. Schimmelman

The book offers a history of the tintype from its invention in Paris to the end of the wet-plate era. Americans embraced the tintype. They were comfortable with its artlessness and liked the come-as-you-are independence of the thing. The stories were real, untouched by the manipulations of artist or photographer, and unencumbered by Romantic notions of moral and civic virtue.

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Classical Romantic: Identity in the Latin Poetry of Vincent Bourne

Estelle Haan

Vincent Bourne (1694-1747) was one of the most popular Latin poets of his day. His Latin verse appealed to early eighteenth-century and Romantic sensibilities. The present study examines a broad range of that Latin verse in its classical, neo-Latin, and vernacular contexts with particular attention to the theme of identity (and differing forms of identity). Appended to the study are the texts (with Haan's translations) of the Latin poetry discussed.

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potheses" deserving of scientific legitimacy. This is just drivel, and deserves our unmitigated contempt.

Not one word that the "designers" say—indeed, not one word in Mr. Berlinski's essay or in my letter—is of any scientific value whatsoever. This does not delegitimize such discourse, but rather places it in a value sphere outside of science. As Gilbert Ryle once said, "Physicists may one day have found the answers to all physical questions, but not all questions are physical questions." This, I believe, is the correct stance of believers.

HERBERT GINTIS
Santa Fe Institute
Northampton, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

It is a sour reader who is not charmed by David Berlinski's wit, but he is wrong to state that latent physical abilities (or "unopened gifts," as he calls them) "make no sense in Darwinian terms." He writes of an Ecuadorian primitive who could be educated at Oxford to the same polish as a native Briton. But this is in fact a function of the intertwining of nature and nurture. Some inherited traits must be nurtured in order to come to fruition. Others require no gestation period: they confer immediate advantage on the inheritor.

Statistically, both traits follow Darwin. In the drive toward survival/dominance, there is no statistical distinction between the effect varying the degree of "fit" for nature/nurture traits and the frequency with which simple advantaging traits occur during reproduction.

Mr. Berlinski is also wrong in stating that "useless genes are subject to negative selection pressure, and therefore must drain away into the sands of time." Genomes contain many segments that may be dormant at a given time but can be reactivated in a new or altered environment.

LOUIS HAROVITZ
Staten Island, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

I appreciated and concurred with David Berlinski's reflections in "The God of the Gaps." Primitive man clearly had capabilities that were not needed in his environment; the treatment of "gaps" by Darwinians often seems an expression less of scientific method than of articles of faith; genetic endowment does not explain human qualities; the physical sciences cannot capture the spiritual dimension of life.

In this connection, it is useful to differentiate between that which occurs within a given "level" of evolution and that which pertains to a "new" or more advanced level. For example, the level of dead matter differs from the advanced level of living matter; non-mammalian animal life differs from mammalian life, which in turn differs from the new level of man.

Reductionists seek to explain a higher level by reducing it to a lower level. Thus, they attempt to explain reasoning in terms of brain functions, and thence biology, chemistry, and physics. Yet experience shows that each new level has its own laws, which better explain its behavior than do the laws of the level that preceded or gave rise to it. Thus, no matter how perfect our study of the cells and impulses of the brain were to be, it could never "tell" what a person is thinking, let alone whether his thoughts are true or false. Even in disciplines developed by man, arithmetic does not explain algebra, which does not explain calculus. Nor does the Newtonian physics of motion explain modern physics (be it relativity or uncertainty). On the contrary, a higher level permits a better understanding of the qualities of preceding levels.

Thus, as Mr. Berlinski notes, reducing the *Iliad* to bestial fighting eliminates "everything that is of interest" in it. Analogously, reducing the choices made by individuals to deterministic formulas eliminates everything that is of interest in them. As we move to each higher level of evolution, there is greater freedom, and therefore newness.

From this perspective, "evolution" is not antithetical to intelligent design but a partner; the former focuses within a given level, while the latter focuses on the formation of a newer level. A higher level certainly requires its predecessor, but the explanation for its formation requires a perspective that is absent from the lower level. The lower level is studied bottom-up, or causally, while the transition to the higher level is better understood top-down, or teleologically, as though there were a purpose to be fulfilled. Moreover, a higher level influences lower levels, as when thought moves a body, or when biology harnesses chemistry. (As Mr. Berlinski well points out, man's anatomical structure differentiates him from the chimpanzee.)

The materialist (or reducible) view of the world emphasizes what is base in man's makeup, while the design view emphasizes the elevated role of ideas and spirit. At issue, in the end, is not just whether there is a God but upon which element our eyes are trained.

ALLEN WEINGARTEN
Monroe Township, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

David Berlinski's witty skewering of atheist pretensions reminded me of a review by John R. Searle of Daniel C. Dennett's book *Consciousness Explained* that appeared in the *New York Review of Books* several years ago and that is now available in an anthology of Searle's writings. Searle charged that Dennett's book "makes no contribution to the problem of consciousness but rather denies that there is any such problem in the first place." Further: "I regard Dennett's denial of the existence of consciousness," says Searle, "not as a new discovery or even as a serious possibility but rather as a form of intellectual pathology."

Understandably, Dennett wrote back offended, insisting that "the persistent problem of consciousness is going to remain a mystery until we find some such dead obvious intuition [like the feeling of pain when someone pinches his forearm] and show that, in spite of first appearances, it is false!" To adopt anything but a third-person perspective when studying first-person phenomena would represent, for Dennett, the abandonment of scientific methodology.

To which Searle offered the obvious riposte:

> Here is the paradox of this exchange: I am a conscious reviewer con-

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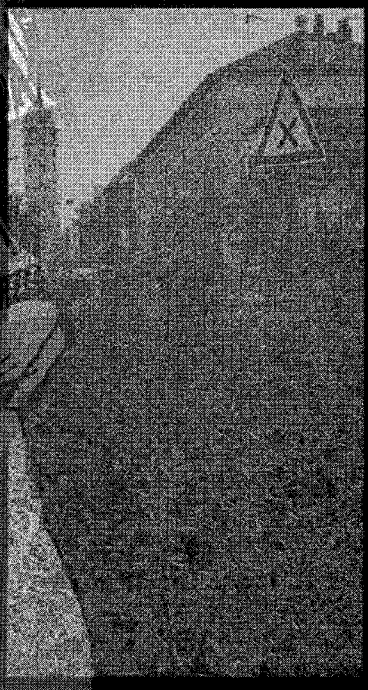

Blowing the Whistle on Genocide

Josiah E. Dubois, Jr. and the Struggle for a U.S. Response to the Holocaust

Foreword by Stuart E. Eizenstat
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sciously answering the objections of an author who gives every indication of being consciously and puzzlingly angry. I do this for a readership that I assume is conscious. How then can I take seriously his claim that consciousness does not really exist?

Outsiders to this debate who find their faith in God grounded on firmer soil than the latest lucubrations of noisy and self-congratulatory materialists can at least take occasional pleasure in seeing these pretensions so masterfully punctured by thinkers who know a fallacy in reasoning when they see one. Atheism may have damaging consequences for society, but I'll at least say this for the new atheists: they sure are good for a laugh.

REV. EDWARD T. OAKES, S.J.
University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary
Mundelein, Illinois

DAVID BERLINSKI writes:

I am grateful for these letters and the generous sentiments they convey. After publishing a number of articles in COMMENTARY in which, I have been assured, I got everything wrong, it is gratifying to discover that in "The God of the Gaps," I got something right. Correspondents troubled that I might be embarrassed by their praise may set aside their concerns.

My views, Herbert Gintis writes, "are akin to that of Einstein and other great scientists." I am certain this is so, even though, with respect to Einstein, no one is quite sure what his views really were. In a letter sold recently at auction, Einstein affirmed that "the word God is for me nothing more than the expression and product of human weaknesses, the Bible a collection of honorable, but still primitive legends which are nevertheless pretty childish. No interpretation no matter how subtle can (for me) change this."

This quotation conveys a crudeness of thought somewhat at odds with the popular impression that Einstein was the most intelligent man who ever lived; but there are, of course, many other remarks attributed to Einstein suggesting a less peremptory attitude. Even though they are in conflict, I agree with them all.

There are two respects in which I might take issue with Mr. Gintis. One of them is trivial. "The fact that vision has evolved many times in many species," he writes, "shows clearly that vision is the product of a wholly natural process." Is there a difference between saying this, I wonder, and saying simply that organs of sight have evolved many times? Why not leave naturalness to the naturalists?

There is no gainsaying the fact that organs of sight have appeared in evolutionary history, but whether we have understood the process by which they have appeared is another matter entirely. If we cannot say what the eye does, beyond saying that it allows organisms to see, what confidence might we repose in *any* evolutionary explanation of its origins? As readers of COMMENTARY may remember, I discussed this issue, which is more logical than biological, in "A Scientific Scandal" (April 2003), and before that in "The Deniable Darwin" (June 1996).

Mr. Gintis is offended by dogmatic affirmations of atheism. I am, too. But then he adds a curious remark. The scientific atheists, he says, "are far less dangerous than the 'intelligent-design' crowd, which denies modern evolutionary biology altogether and holds that our ruminations about the metaphysics of the universe are 'alternative scientific hypotheses' deserving of scientific legitimacy. This is just drivel, and deserves our unmitigated contempt."

I am as willing as Mr. Gintis to unmitigate my contempt in the face of drivel, but while what he has to say is very stern, it is also very silly. Having rejected Darwin's theory, I have also rejected intelligent design as an alternative—and in the pages of COMMENTARY, no less ("Has Darwin Met His Match?," December 2002). I come to this discussion with unstained hands. Nonetheless, the attack on theorists of intelligent design (and, I might add, on the Discovery Institute, which has promoted their work) has represented a form of barely controlled hysteria.

For this reason, it seems to me important—morally as well as intellectually —to stress two things:

First: critics of Darwin's theory of evolution like Philip Johnson, Michael Behe, Steven Meyer, Paul Nelson, William Dembski, and Jonathan Wells have pointed to problems with respect to that theory that biologists simultaneously asserted did not exist and would soon be remedied. The problems were real. The remedies have not yet been forthcoming.

Second: when it comes to denying things, *no one* in the intelligent-design community is prepared to deny evolution altogether. How could anyone? It is, to repeat, Darwin's *theory* of evolution that has been the cynosure of their concerns —and of mine, too.

This is not the place to rehearse yet again the theories of intelligent design. Nor is it the place to rehearse once again criticisms of Darwin's theory. In any case, a sense that Darwinian theory is inadequate to explain the complexity of living systems is now common *within* the community of evolutionary biologists; I offer more detailed arguments and references to this literature in *The Devil's Delusion*. With that said, why, then, is intelligent design so very dangerous? If theories of intelligent design are true, they pose no danger. If they are false, who cares? And if we do not now know whether they are true or false, surely we can wait without anxiety?

I AM not sure what to make of Louis Harovitz's response to my article because I suspect that deep down we do not disagree. "Some inherited traits must be nurtured," he write, "in order to come to fruition. Others require no gestation period: they confer immediate advantage on the inheritor." This is obviously so.

The question raised by Alfred Wallace is otherwise. What is the *origin*, Wallace asked, of certain characteristically human abilities? No schedule of selective advantages accounts for their appearance, he observed, because within primitive societies none exists.

If it is not clear how such unopened gifts arose when they were not needed, it is equally unclear why they

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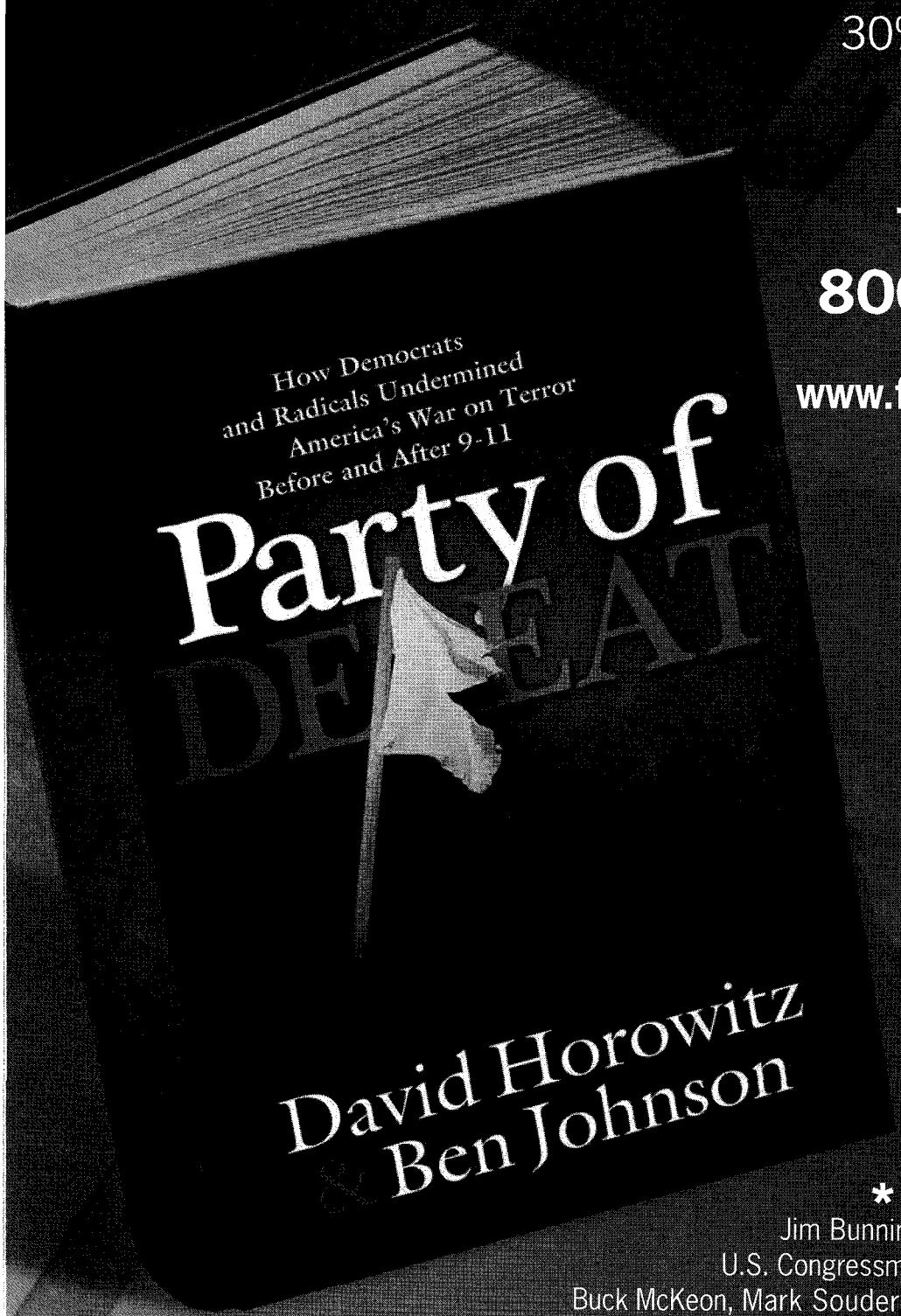

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should have persisted when they were not used. "Genomes," Mr. Harovitz writes, "contain many segments that may be dormant at a given time, but can be reactivated in a new or altered environment." True enough: genetic reversals of a single genetic variable do occur. But what is at issue is hardly a single genetic variable. It is typically a complicated series of morphological and psychological traits that are under the control of a very large number of genes if they are under genetic control at all. Can these be raised from the dead once they are gone?

In answering affirmatively, Mr. Harovitz may be referring to the marine benthic *Ostracoda* (Arthropoda: Crustacea). Writing in the 2002 issue of *Revista Española de Micropaleontologia*, R. V. Dingle argued that two species of *Ostracoda* seem to have regained their sight by the "rejuvenation of ocular structures from functionally blind ancestors through the reactivation of dormant genes."

This is curious, if true. Either we must credit Dingle, who suggests that the shrimp can see again, or we must credit Darwin, who suggests that they cannot. It is Dingle *or* Darwin, but not both. In the July 2007 issue of *The Journal of Paleontology*, G. Hunt has suggested that there is less to Dingle's story than meets the eye and so assigns the palm to Darwin. I have no idea, needless to say, who is right about the shrimp. I am content to let Dingle and Darwin fight it out.

But Mr. Harovitz has allowed himself to become distracted. Nothing like "reactivation" is at issue in the argument that Wallace made. The human powers latent in primitive societies do not need to be reactivated. There is no evidence whatsoever that they are dormant in anything, beyond the obvious sense that they are not in use.

On the other hand, were we to discover that the spotted hyena, as a species, has the unsuspected ability to insert itself into social life at Harvard, Mr. Harovitz, I expect, might be surprised. And for obvious reasons. The requisite abilities involve behavior in which the comparatively fastidious hyena *never* indulges, and they would have been of little use—perhaps none—when it came to eating carrion or laughing ghoulishly in the night.

Genes that undergo no positive selective pressure and that just hang around hoping later in time to be useful are, in fact, deleterious to the organism. They slow reproduction, waste energy, take up space, and clutter up the genome. In the case of the spotted hyena, there are no such genes. In the case of human beings, there are.

Why?

HAVING MADE so many new friends, I am pleased to see in Allen Weingarten yet another. But I do have a few reservations about what he has written. (What, after all, are friends for?)

"Even in disciplines developed by man," Mr. Weingarten writes, "arithmetic does not explain algebra, which does not explain calculus." I am not sure why arithmetic *should* explain algebra, or whether anyone ever thought it did. But still less is it clear that arithmetic *cannot* explain calculus. It was precisely the great achievement of 19th-century mathematics to show that the entire obscure, metaphysically suspect machinery invented by Leibniz and Newton could step by step be reduced to the natural numbers and the laws governing their nature. On this matter, readers might consult my own *A Tour of the Calculus*.

Don't get me wrong. The specific cases that Mr. Weingarten cites in his rejection of reductionism are fine, and I agree with most of the conclusions that he draws. There is very little evidence, as he suggests, that the principles of chemistry will in the end explain the principles of life. Still, I find myself discontented with this way of putting things. With respect to such issues as the brain and the mind, for example, what is important is our commitment to the facts. The brain is what it is; but so, too, is the mind. Let us learn what we can about what interests us; *then* we can talk about whether the mind is the brain, or the brain the mind. For the moment, we understand almost nothing of *either*.

FATHER OAKES has pleasingly reminded me of the exhilarating dumb show between John Searle and Daniel Dennett. I would have greater sympathy with either man's position on the problem of consciousness were I to understand better the problem itself.

What problem, I am inclined to ask? A close study of a number of cases—an attempt to tie consciousness as a category to facts on the ground—would at least dispel the impression that Searle and Dennett are shuffling ontological claims to no very good end.

Human beings are both objects *in* the world and subjects *of* the world. It is surely true that if dropped from a great height a stone and a philosopher will accelerate at the same rate of speed. Nonetheless, the philosopher but not the stone will anticipate his immediate future with a marked lack of enthusiasm. Surely this is something that calls for an explanation?

Yes, absolutely. But why is the problem more vexing than the correlative problem of explaining why both the stone and the philosopher are falling at all? Surely this, too, calls out for an explanation. In the case of their descent, the explanation must appeal either to a universal force or to the curvature of space and time. But if we can with equanimity tolerate universal forces or curved space and time in physics, why not minds or souls in psychology? The difference in the two cases does not rest with ontological distinctions at all.

In one respect, I think Dennett is correct. It may well be that there are certain kinds of facts about the human mind that we cannot interpret in the terms of any known scientific scheme. Dennett regards this as a grave problem—and it is, but only for those who imagine that the sciences are in a position to answer all of the questions that we might find interesting.

And they aren't.

Fourth Pillar

TO THE EDITOR:

I am honored that Norman Podhoretz has used one of my posts on "Power Line" as a foil for his argument that the Fourth Pillar of the Bush doctrine—namely, that before negotiations about the creation of

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a Palestinian state could take place, the Palestinians would have to undertake a sustained fight against terrorist groups and infrastructure—remains intact ["Israel and the Palestinians: Has Bush Reneged?," April]. I also take some comfort in Mr. Podhoretz's guarded optimism on this score. But in the end, I am not persuaded.

As Mr. Podhoretz sees it, the present arrangement is that negotiations about a Palestinian state will go forward in advance of any sustained fight by the Palestinians against terrorism. Indeed, negotiations can proceed to the point of forging a permanent-status agreement on borders, Jerusalem, refugees, and settlements. However, President Bush promises, the fruits of these negotiations will not be implemented until the Palestinian Authority (PA) has taken the steps that originally were supposed to precede negotiations.

But this is not the original Fourth Pillar, and something of value has been lost. The PA now gets a seat at the table, plus the opportunity to negotiate for everything it desires, without having to take any steps to curb terrorism. We have forfeited whatever prod there might have been to the Palestinians by their being left out in the cold in the absence of meaningful action.

Moreover, Mr. Podhoretz does not dispute the prevailing assumption that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is the author of this revision. He does say that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert jumped on the idea "quickly and enthusiastically," and he speculates that if Olmert had objected, Bush might have yielded to him. But if we were talking about a standing doctrinal pillar of American policy, it should not have been left to Olmert to save Bush from his Secretary of State (or not, as turned out to be the case).

Mr. Podhoretz is probably correct that serious harm will result only if the final negotiated settlement is implemented without the Palestinians having been made to do their part. Time will tell on this count, but there are legitimate reasons for concern. Once a final deal has been hammered out, the momentum for implementing it will likely be quite powerful, perhaps powerful enough to override a past utterance of an unpopular ex-President.

Moreover, Bush's (former) precondition can also be subjected to quite a bit of interpretation. If the parties have succeeded in negotiating a final deal, and the Palestinians have made a few anti-terror gestures and arrested some of the usual suspects, who will be so churlish as to deem such actions insufficient? Not, in all likelihood, Barack Obama. Perhaps not even John McCain.

PAUL MIRENGOFF
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz's valuable article recognizes that George W. Bush's statements of June 24, 2002, April 14, 2004, and January 10, 2008 about the Israel-Palestinian conflict constitute a commitment by the U.S. to Israel that the latter has acted upon and that should bind subsequent American administrations as well.

That is particularly true of Bush's 2004 statement, which was issued as part of a deal governing Israel's disengagement from Gaza. Pursuant to that deal, Israel dismantled 25 settlements in Gaza and the West Bank—giving the Palestinians the chance to demonstrate their readiness to live "side by side in peace and security"—in exchange for certain assurances that were negotiated at the highest levels of the American and Israeli governments. The letter was given additional force by the fact that Congress expressly endorsed its principles in a resolution. Israel, for its part, included the letter in its official Disengagement Plan.

Israel fulfilled its end of the bargain, and had every right to expect that the U.S. would (in Bush's words) "do its utmost to prevent any attempt by anyone to impose any other plan" than the three-phase Road Map. An essential part of that plan, as Mr. Podhoretz recognized in his April 2005 COMMENTARY article on the disengagement ("Bush, Sharon, My Daughter, and Me"), was that there could be no provisional Palestinian state (Phase II), nor any commencement of final-status negotiations (Phase III), unless the Palestinians first met their obligation of "sustained, targeted, and effective operations to . . . dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure" (Phase I).

When the Iraq Study Group later recommended "unconditional" meetings between Israel and the Palestinians "as soon as possible" in order to "negotiate peace as was done at the Madrid Conference in 1991," it flatly contradicted the conditions of the Road Map. Nevertheless, the Bush administration made the recommendation one of its principal foreign-policy objectives, and sent its Secretary of State on trip after trip to pursue an immediate final-status agreement.

Mr. Podhoretz asserts that Bush has reaffirmed "in unmistakable terms" that the Phase III agreement—which he wishes to complete before leaving office—is "subject to implementation of the Road Map." But if the U.S. can skip Phase I of the Road Map after having promised to prevent "any" attempt by "anyone" to impose "any" other plan, it can also, down the road, support the creation of a Palestinian state without insisting on the dismantling of terrorist infrastructure.

The reasons that undoubtedly will be given at that time will be that (1) the Palestinians cannot practically dismantle terrorism until they actually have a state, and that (2) because a state has been agreed upon, delay in founding it would only allow terrorism to continue. Alternatively, "dismantlement" will be redefined: terrorist groups will be incorporated into the Palestinian "security forces," and—*voilà*—they will have been "dismantled." Those groups will later take over the state, either by election or by coup. It has happened before.

RICK RICHMAN
Jewish Current Issues
Los Angeles, California

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

Paul Mirengoff and Rick Richman both make compelling criticisms of my argument, but anything I might say in response would only restate what I said in my article. So I hope they will forgive me if I rest my

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case without a final summation.

Except for this: the more I think about the Palestinians, the more I become convinced that perhaps the most famous thing ever said about them—Abba Eban's crack that they "never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity"—is mistaken. The assumption Eban was making, of course, and that the whole world shares, is that the Palestinians really do want a state of their own. But if so, why have they violently repudiated—not just "missed" but rejected with all their might—the three excellent chances they have been given to get one (by the UN in 1947, by Ehud Barak in 2000, and now by George W. Bush and the Israeli government itself)?

The explanation I find increasingly persuasive is that they prefer a situation in which they can blame all their troubles on Israel and America instead of at long last beginning to take responsibility for themselves. If that is indeed the case, then even if the Fourth Pillar should fall, no Palestinian state will arise out of the rubble in any foreseeable future. Where that leaves Israel is another question, and one to which I do not begin to have an answer.

Bored by Music?

To the Editor:

Contrary to what Terry Teachout suggests, the problem with classical music in the 21st century—and jazz in the 21st century, for that matter—is not presentation ["Free the Piano Player," April]. It has more to do with the fact that there is little or no musical education being offered in schools. There is also a kind of distrust of expertise discernible in the culture. People want to see something they think they could do themselves. This is the era of *American Idol*, of interactivity—not a period in which sitting in an audience to watch someone else perform, however brilliantly, is considered a worthy distraction.

I think Mr. Teachout misses this larger point. The reason he himself may be bored at some concerts is that he is musically trained and learned, and has no doubt heard the pieces on the program performed any number of times by wonderful and not-so-wonderful artists. But what may be staid performances to the professional ear could still be magical to the amateur—if the amateur were given a basic musical education.

Tali Makell
Brooklyn, New York

To the Editor:

Thanks for Terry Teachout's brilliant article. As a practicing classical musician and concert pianist myself, I am inspired by his depiction of the spirited performances of yore. Let us indeed liberate the pianist from gratuitous, "soul-numbing priggishness."

Andrew Wise
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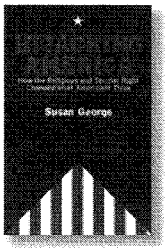

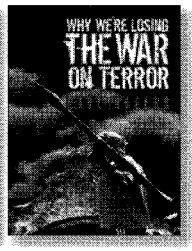

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TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

I have no doubt that the drying-up of public-school arts-education programs has had much to do with the crisis of classical music in America, but I very much doubt that it is the only reason, or even the main one. Jazz, after all, has only just begun to be taught as a secondary-school academic subject, and in the days of its widest popularity it was not considered suitable for discussion in the schools. When I was a child growing up in the 1960's, my interest in classical music had far more to do with my having heard it on network TV than with the modest number of music-appreciation courses that I took in elementary school. In any case, I never claimed that boring concerts were *the* problem with classical music in the 21st century, merely that they were *a* problem.

As for Tali Makell's suggestion that widespread "distrust of expertise" has undermined the cultural purchase of classical music, I find the point interesting but ultimately unconvincing. In fact, nothing would be more healthy than the emergence of a true amateur musical culture, one in which potential audience members knew from experience what it was like to play the kind of music they heard on stage. Perhaps the emphasis on "interactivity" that is a hallmark of the new-media culture will have a similarly galvanizing effect on young concertgoers of the 21st century.

My thanks to Andrew Wise for his kind words. It will be interesting to hear—and see—what my piece inspires him to do in his future performances.

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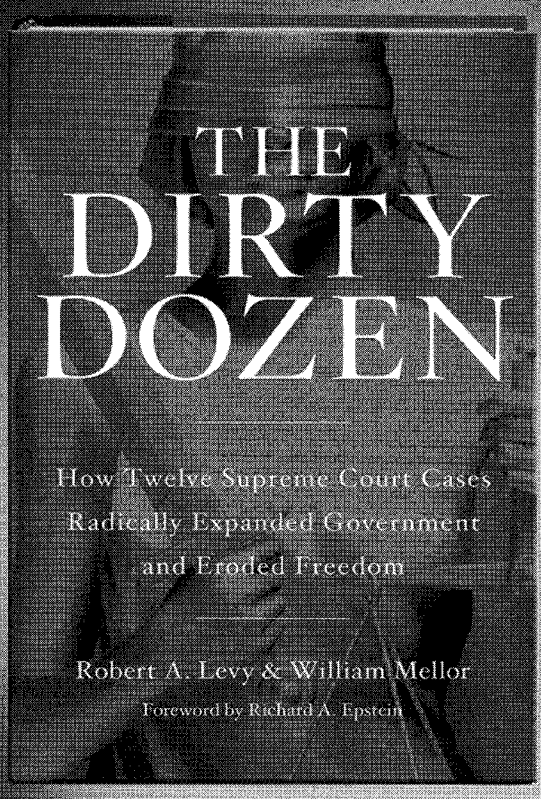

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Commentary
July-August 2008

Are We Winning the War on Terror?

Max Boot

> On balance, we are doing pretty well. Near strategic defeat of al Qaeda in Iraq. Near strategic defeat for al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. Significant setbacks for al Qaeda globally—and here I'm going to use the word "ideologically"—as a lot of the Islamic world pushes back on their form of Islam.

THUS SPOKE CIA Director Michael Hayden in an interview with the *Washington Post* published on May 30 under the headline, "U.S. Cites Big Gains Against al Qaeda."

Hayden's upbeat assessment is shared by a surprising number of analysts who have written recently about al Qaeda's decline and possible fall, including Fareed Zakaria in *Newsweek*, David Ignatius in the *Washington Post*, Lawrence Wright in the *New Yorker*, Peter Bergen and Paul Cruikshank in the *New Republic*, former CIA analyst Marc Sageman in a new book, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the 21st Century*, and Michael Sheehan, a former New York Police Department counterterrorism chief, in *Crush the Cell: How to Defeat Terrorism Without Terrorizing Ourselves*.

There is much evidence to support their optimistic conclusions—certainly more evidence than there was to support the previous conventional wisdom, propounded by many of these same writers not so long ago, that the American-led invasion of Iraq was a great gift to al Qaeda and that as a result we were losing the global war on terror. (Bergen, for instance, published an article just last fall entitled, "War of Error: How Osama bin Laden Beat George W. Bush.")

It turns out that, far from emerging victorious, al Qaeda in Iraq has been driven out of its erstwhile strongholds in Anbar, Baghdad, and Diyala provinces. Its last refuge is in the northern city of Mosul, and even there, thanks to a joint Iraqi-American offensive, attacks were cut in half during the month of May. From Basra to Baghdad, Shiite terrorists loosely affiliated with Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi army are also in retreat, thanks primarily to the operations of the Iraqi security forces under the direction of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Outside of Iraq and Afghanistan, al Qaeda has not managed to mount any major attacks on an American target, much less on the American homeland, since 9/11. Those attacks that have succeeded have been fairly minor compared with past al-Qaeda atrocities: a 2004 assault on the U.S. consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, killed five local employees and no Americans.

There is good reason to think that al Qaeda is still reeling from the blows it suffered in the aftermath of 9/11. As Wright notes, "nearly 80 percent of al Qaeda's members in Afghanistan were killed in

MAX BOOT *is a senior fellow in national-security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, a regular contributor to* COMMENTARY*'s blog* contentions, *and the author most recently of* War Made New: Weapons, Warriors, and the Making of the Modern World *(Gotham, 2006).*

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the final months of 2001," and since then more have been killed or captured in countries ranging from Yemen and Pakistan to Spain and Indonesia. In his *Washington Post* interview, Hayden mentioned that since the beginning of this year alone, "al Qaeda's global leadership has lost three senior officers, including two who succumbed 'to violence,' an apparent reference to Predator strikes that killed terrorist leaders Abu Laith al-Libi and Abu Sulayman al-Jazairi in Pakistan." In an effort to avoid a similar fate, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, the top leaders, have gone into progressively deeper hiding, probably in the rugged tribal areas of western Pakistan. This has kept them alive and free but made it difficult for them to communicate with their followers or guide their efforts.

THE THINNING of its ranks and the loss of central direction have had an obvious impact on al Qaeda's operational effectiveness. A new study from Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, *Human Security 2007*, finds that since 2001, there has been a net decline of 40 percent in casualties from terrorism around the world. (That is excluding Iraq, which is after all a war zone; if you include it, there has been an overall increase since 2001 but a decrease since 2006.) Another 2007 analysis, by the U.S.-based IntelCenter, "came to the conclusion," according to Zakaria, "that the number of Islamist attacks had declined 65 percent from a high point in 2004, and fatalities from such attacks had declined by 90 percent."

With only a handful of exceptions—the bombings in Bali (2002), Madrid (2004), and London (2005) come to mind—the attacks staged by al Qaeda and its affiliates have mostly killed fellow Muslims. This has led to a major backlash in the Muslim world. The survey data are summarized by the Simon Fraser report:

> Muslim support for terrorist violence against civilians [as of July 2007] had declined by half or more over five years in all of the four countries polled: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.
>
> By late 2007 in Afghanistan, just 1 percent of Afghans "strongly supported" the presence of the Taliban and foreign jihadi fighters in their country. In Pakistan, support for Islamist political parties has collapsed—dropping by more than four-fifths between the 2002 and 2008 national elections. And in the North-West Frontier Province where al Qaeda has its strongest presence in Pakistan, support for Osama bin Laden dropped from 70 percent in August 2007 to 4 percent in January 2008.
>
> A December 2007 poll in Saudi Arabia found that Osama bin Laden's fellow countrymen had "dramatically turned against him, against al Qaeda, and against terrorism in general." And in Iraq, where the Islamists have suffered their greatest recent strategic setback, a major poll also released in December 2007 found that 100 percent of Iraqis—Sunnis as well as Shiites—found al Qaeda in Iraq's attacks on civilians to be "unacceptable."

Al Qaeda has not only lost support among the Muslim masses. It has lost support even among some of its strongest adherents. Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, better known as "Dr. Fadl," was a co-founder of Egyptian Islamic Jihad and al Qaeda. He was a mentor to Ayman al-Zawahiri, and the author of one of the most important jihadist tracts, *Guide to the Path of Righteousness for Jihad and Belief*. Last year, from an Egyptian prison cell, he issued a groundbreaking manifesto, *Rationalizing Jihad in Egypt and the World*. While stipulating that some jihadist activity (e.g., in Afghanistan) is still justified, al-Sharif denounces the sort of indiscriminate bombings perpetrated by al Qaeda and particularly disagrees with attacks on Christians and Jews: "They are the neighbors of the Muslims . . . and being kind to one's neighbors is a religious duty." Zawahiri took this well-publicized challenge so seriously that he issued a response running to nearly 200 pages.

Other defectors from the jihadist ranks include the Saudi religious scholar Sheikh Salman al-Oudah, who according to Bergen and Cruikshank is "considered one of the fathers of the Sahwa, the fundamentalist awakening movement that swept through Saudi Arabia in the 80's," and whose sermons "helped turn bin Laden against the United States." Yet despite his impeccable pedigree, al-Oudah last year took to one of the most popular TV networks in the Middle East to denounce bin Laden in biting, personal terms:

> My brother Osama, how much blood has been spilled? How many innocent people, children, elderly, and women have been killed . . . in the name of al Qaeda? Will you be happy to meet God Almighty carrying the burden of these hundreds of thousands or millions on your back?

IF EVEN veteran jihadists are renouncing al Qaeda, is it time, then, to haul out the "Mission Accomplished" banner in the war on terrorism? There is an incentive for some conservatives and liberals to think so: the former because they want to proclaim President Bush's tough anti-ter-

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rorist efforts to be a success, the latter because they want to claim that the terrorist threat has been overhyped and that we should leave Iraq and stop countenancing any restrictions on our civil liberties in the name of fighting terror. Even in the military, hardly a bastion of peaceniks, there is a tendency among many officers to suggest that, with the threat from terrorists and guerrillas on the wane, it is time to get back to old-fashioned soldiering focused on more conventional challenges.

For my part, while applauding the hard-won gains, I cannot help remembering that obituaries for al Qaeda have been written before and have proved premature. Who can forget the classic op-ed article in the *New York Times* under the headline, "The Declining Terrorist Threat"? The author, a former State Department official named Larry Johnson, wrote:

> Judging from news reports and the portrayal of villains in our popular entertainment, Americans are bedeviled by fantasies about terrorism. They seem to believe that terrorism is the greatest threat to the United States and that it is becoming more widespread and lethal. They are likely to think that the United States is the most popular target of terrorists. And they almost certainly have the impression that extremist Islamic groups cause most terrorism. None of these beliefs [is] based in fact.

This spectacularly misbegotten passage was published on July 10, 2001—two months before 9/11. Today, thanks to a combination of counterterrorism successes and terrorist blundering, the threat has indeed declined. But it has hardly gone away, and there is always the possibility that our enemies will spring another nasty surprise from out of the blue.

The leading cause for continued concern is probably al Qaeda's success in constructing a sanctuary in Pakistan to replace the one it lost in Afghanistan after 9/11. Mike McConnell, director of National Intelligence, told Congress on February 27:

> Despite our successes, the group has retained or regenerated key elements of its capability, including top leadership, operational mid-level lieutenants, and de-facto safe haven in Pakistan's border area with Afghanistan.

As part of this rebuilding process, a July 2007 National Intelligence Estimate concluded, al Qaeda has "regenerated key elements" of its capability to attack the American homeland.

Pakistan's government has repeatedly promised to send troops to clean out the al-Qaeda and Taliban sanctuaries. And it has just as repeatedly reneged on those pledges. General Dan McNeill, the outgoing commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, told reporters on May 29 that we are seeing a "different approach" on Pakistan's part—an approach that seeks to appease the militants by striking non-aggression accords with them. Each time that has happened, attacks in both Afghanistan and Pakistan have spiked. The militants have become so emboldened since the last ceasefire in 2005 that they have established their own state-within-a-state and expanded their insurgency into the heart of Pakistan itself.

The most notable victim of this wave of Islamist terror was opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, murdered last December. Across the border in Afghanistan, Prime Minister Hamid Karzai was the target of a bold assassination attempt on April 27 of this year. Last year, losses in both Afghanistan and Pakistan reached their highest levels since the fall of the Taliban.

Although in the foreseeable future there is scant likelihood of Islamic radicals taking over all of Afghanistan or Pakistan, the latter's nuclear program makes the insurgency especially worrisome. Considering that a number of extremists have infiltrated Pakistan's most sensitive facilities in the past, it is not inconceivable that militants could get their hands on a bomb. And Baitullah Mehsud, leader of the Pakistani Taliban, has vowed to carry his campaign of terror outside of the region. He told *al Jazeera* on January 25: "We want to eradicate Britain and America, and to shatter the arrogance and tyranny of the infidels. We pray that Allah will enable us to destroy the White House, New York, and London."

Nor, although Pakistan is now the most notable sanctuary for al Qaeda, is it the only one. The State Department's most recent *Country Reports on Terrorism*, released on April 30, lists many other areas around the globe where the group continues to operate:

> A small number of al-Qaeda (AQ) operatives remain in East Africa, particularly Somalia, where they pose a serious threat to U.S. and allied interests in the region. . . . AQ-inspired terrorist elements, elements of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and the Lord's Resistance Army, remained in Sudan. . . . Remote areas of the Sahel and Maghreb regions in Africa serve as terrorist safe havens. The threat to U.S. interests from Islamic extremists increased in 2007 as a result of AQ merging with two Islamic extremist organizations that operate in the region: al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb,

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based in Algeria, and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. . . . Southeast Asia includes a safe-haven area composed of the Sulawesi Sea and Sulu Archipelago, which sit astride the maritime boundary between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. . . . The southern Philippines, specifically the Sulu archipelago and Mindanao, serve as terrorist safe havens. . . . Although no corroborated information shows that Hizballah, Hamas, or other Islamic extremist groups used the TBA [Tri-Border Area between Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay] for military-type training or planning of terrorist operations, the United States remains concerned that these groups use the TBA as a safe haven to raise funds.

In all of these locales, the U.S. and allied police, intelligence, and military services have made gains in recent years. But, as the State Department notes, the battle is hardly won.

The same might be said of Western Europe. Recall that the core 9/11 hijackers came from Hamburg. Since the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, and especially since the Madrid and London bombings, European security agencies have made considerable progress in stamping out militant cells. But there, too, the threat remains. Jonathan Evans, head of the British intelligence service MI5, stated last fall that some 2,000 individuals in the United Kingdom posed a threat because of their support for terrorism—a figure that had risen by 400 since 2006. Since most of these British Islamists are either Pakistani immigrants or descendants of immigrants, they have ready access to training and guidance from the al-Qaeda safe havens in Pakistan.

Evans added that the terror threat in the UK had not yet "reached its peak." That should be of particular concern to Washington because citizens of the UK, along with those from other European Union nations, enjoy visa-free travel to the U.S. Indeed, al Qaeda has made considerable efforts to recruit European Muslims for precisely that reason. So far, none has managed to carry out a major attack against Americans, but this has had much to do both with good luck and with aggressive police and intelligence work. Our growing sense of progress in the battle against terrorism would have vanished overnight if a group of two dozen British-based Muslims had succeeded in their plot, uncovered in 2006, to use liquid explosives to blow as many as ten trans-Atlantic passenger planes out of the air.

Europe will remain at long-term risk from terrorism because of its failure to integrate the offspring of Muslim immigrants, thus creating embittered minorities ripe for radicalization. The U.S. has done a great deal better in this regard. Still, as a New York Police Department report observed last year, even if Muslims in the U.S. are "more resistant" to the radical jihadist message, they are "not immune." Indeed, the NYPD and other law-enforcement agencies have busted a number of homegrown terrorist plots since 9/11 that, if left undetected, could have been as deadly as the London or Madrid bombings.

The NYPD report noted that many of the conspirators involved in these plots have been inspired not by personal contact with al-Qaeda leaders, as was the case with the 9/11 plotters, but by radical websites. As detailed in a March report by Daniel Kimmage, an analyst for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, radical Islamists have developed a sophisticated system for disseminating propaganda via the Internet. Three "virtual media production and distribution entities"—Fajr, the Global Islamic Media Front, and Sahab—post materials on behalf of a variety of militant Islamist groups, including slick videos showcasing terrorist attacks set to inspirational music and exhortations to the faithful from Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. If the authorities manage to shut down one website, another quickly takes its place.

Terrorists who find their inspiration online and never visit an actual training camp are unlikely to achieve a very high degree of proficiency. But even relatively unsophisticated radicals can cause considerable destruction, as seen by the 191 people killed in Madrid and 52 killed in London. The Madrid bombing, in particular, played a pivotal role in changing the outcome of Spain's election and driving its troops out of Iraq.

EVEN MORE potent attacks are possible in the future from terrorist groups that enjoy state sponsorship. The two most worrisome countries are Syria and Iran, the latter of which has the dubious honor of being designated by the State Department as the No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism. According to this year's *Country Reports*, "Iran provides aid to Palestinian terrorist groups, Lebanese Hizballah, Iraq-based militants, and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan." Note that the recipients of this largess include not only Shiite outfits like Hizballah and the Mahdi army but also Sunni groups like Hamas and the Taliban. There is even evidence of cooperation between Iran and al Qaeda, notwithstanding the common wisdom in the West that Shiite and Sunni extremists cannot possibly work together.

In his book, *Against All Enemies* (2004), former NSC staffer Richard Clarke wrote that "al Qaeda regularly used Iranian territory for transit and sanc-

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tuary prior to September 11" and that "al Qaeda's Egyptian branch, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, operated openly in Tehran." "It is no coincidence," Clarke continued, "that many of the al-Qaeda management team . . . moved across the border into Iran after U.S. forces finally invaded Afghanistan."

That relationship continues to this day. According to the most recent State Department report,

> Iran [has] remained unwilling to bring to justice senior al-Qaeda (AQ) members it has detained, and has refused to publicly identify those senior members in its custody. Iran has repeatedly resisted numerous calls to transfer custody of its AQ detainees to their countries of origin or third countries for interrogation or trial. Iran [has] also continued to fail to control the activities of some AQ members who fled to Iran following the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

By "fail to control," the State Department apparently means that Iran has allowed some al-Qaeda members on its soil to continue plotting terrorist attacks in countries like Saudi Arabia.

The terror connection is especially menacing because of Iran's nuclear program. The International Atomic Energy Agency has found improvements of late in Iran's ability to enrich uranium. If the mullahs acquire the bomb, the odds of terrorists getting their hands on the ultimate weapon will rise markedly—and will rise again if other states like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, with their own substantial numbers of radicals, make good on their *sotto voce* threats to acquire nukes to counter Iran's.

Closely aligned with Iran is Syria. The ruling clique in Damascus, composed primarily of Alawites (a Shiite sect) who profess a Baathist ideology, has been Iran's most reliable agent in supporting Hizballah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist proxies in the region. "Hamastan" (Gaza) and "Hizballahland" (southern Lebanon) rival Syria, Iran, and Pakistan's tribal areas as terrorist hangouts. Hizballah has managed to strengthen its hand since fighting Israel to a draw in the summer of 2006. Efforts by the elected government of Lebanon to bring this group and its Syrian sponsors to heel were met by a series of deadly car bombings whose victims included former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. This May, the slow-motion Hizballah putsch culminated in the armed takeover of much of Beirut, ending in an ignominious accord that has given Hizballah veto power over the government's future actions.

Both Hizballah and Hamas are receiving a steady supply of ever-deadlier munitions from Iran and Syria. Hamas regularly shoots its rockets at southern Israel, while Hizballah is stockpiling its own rockets for another day—to be used, perhaps, in retaliation for an American or Israeli attack on the Iranian nuclear program.

These groups are a threat not just to two of our allies, Israel and Lebanon, but also to the United States itself. Hizballah, in particular, is responsible for a long line of atrocities against us, including the 1983 bombings of the U.S. embassy and Marine barracks in Beirut. More recently, working with its sponsors in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, Hizballah has been complicit in attacks inside Iraq that have killed hundreds of American soldiers. Coalition forces even captured a Lebanese Hizballah operative in Iraq last year.

It is not hard to imagine that at some point in the future, if given the go-ahead from Tehran, Hizballah could expand its area of operations even farther afield. It has already committed mass murder in South America, specifically in Buenos Aires, where it blew up the Israeli embassy in 1992 and a Jewish community center in 1994. Hizballah is also believed to have cells in Europe, East Asia, and North America. With reason, senior U.S. officials have called Hizballah the "A-Team of Terrorists"; the threat it presents looms large, especially if Iran should precipitate an armed confrontation with the United States.

Al Qaeda, Hizballah, Hamas, and other Islamist groups, whether Sunni or Shiite, all operate in a broader context of Muslim public opinion. As I have mentioned, al Qaeda, which has been killing primarily fellow Muslims, has seen its standing plummet since 9/11. But indications are that Hizballah and Hamas, which have been "resisting" the "Zionist entity," remain more popular. And even al Qaeda's fall in popularity is a relative thing.

The best case for Muslim moderation comes in *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*, by John Esposito, founding director of Georgetown University's Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, and Dalia Mogahed, executive director of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies. Having conducted a six-year survey of tens of thousands of Muslims in more than 35 countries, the authors conclude that "only" 7 percent—i.e., those who say that the 9/11 attacks were "completely" justified—are "politically radicalized."

It is comforting to think that 93 percent of Muslims are "moderates," as Esposito and Mogahed claim. But even if this is true, it still gives us 91 mil-

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lion radicals out of 1.3 billion Muslims world-wide. Actually, according to Robert Satloff of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the figure is much higher. Satloff points out that if one adds the number of Muslims who think that 9/11 was "largely" or "partly" justified, the proportion jumps to 13.5 percent, a gain of 78 million radicals. Adding those who say that the attacks were "in some way" justified would yield another 300 million Muslims, for a total of 36.6 percent.

Which figure gives a better picture of Muslim extremism—7 percent, or 36.6 percent? Either way, the numbers are alarming. Even if you accept the low figure and then calculate that only 1 percent of these would be willing to take up arms, that still leaves more than 900,000 potentially violent radicals. In Iraq, al Qaeda has managed to cause untold carnage with fewer than 10,000 fighters. Imagine what 900,000 jihadists—or even a much smaller number— could do around the globe.

While it takes a significant population and a considerable industrial and technological base to wage modern conventional warfare, the resources needed for terrorism are paltry. The most destructive terrorist attack in history was pulled off by nineteen men with a budget estimated at less than $500,000. It may be true that al Qaeda is losing followers, but even a small core could still carry out unimaginable atrocities, especially if they managed to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Sooner or later, if the terrorists keep trying, they are likely to succeed. As the saying goes, we have to be lucky every time; they have to be lucky once.

TO ALL this one might object that no matter how "lucky" al Qaeda gets, its ultimate objective—establishing a fundamentalist caliphate to rule over the historic lands of Islam, stretching from the Philippines to southern Spain—will remain a mad dream. True: so far, al Qaeda has not toppled a single regime. But many people could still be killed in the quest for this unrealizable goal, just as so many were killed by committed Communists in their quest to bring about a global proletarian revolution. The odds are that the tide of jihadist sentiment, which reached flood level in 2001, will take decades to recede.

And even if the defeat of the jihadists happens faster and sooner, we will still have much to fear from terrorism per se. Al Qaeda is not the first group to use this deadly tactic, and it will not be the last. While Islamists have rightly monopolized much of our attention in recent decades, other terrorist groups have been pioneering some disturbing tactics. Suicide bombers were first used on a large scale not by al Qaeda but by the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. Chemical warfare was employed by the religious cult Aum Shinrikyo, which released sarin gas in the Tokyo subway in 1994. Biological warfare was practiced in Oregon in 1984 by followers of the New Age guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, who poisoned 750 people by infecting the salad bars at ten restaurants with salmonella.

It may seem bizarre to cite obscure religious cults as a serious potential threat to our security, but few people took al Qaeda seriously when it proclaimed war on us in 1996. Thanks to technology and globalization, as a National Intelligence Estimate warned last year, "even small numbers" of like-minded people will continue to be able to find each other and "mobilize resources to attack—all without requiring a centralized terrorist organization, training camp, or leader."

The U.S. is and will remain especially vulnerable to such violence because, as the world's most powerful nation, we will continue to be an inviting target for all sorts of zealots interested in publicizing their grievances. So whatever happens with al Qaeda, we can expect that terrorism, including potentially catastrophic terrorism, will be with us for a long time to come.

Be that as it may, however, it is far too early to write off al Qaeda as our main enemy. In fact, the threat from it actually grows as we become more complacent. It is all too easy to imagine that under a Democratic administration and a Democratic-controlled House and Senate, it will become harder and harder to resist the voices insisting that we pull out of Iraq, repeal the Patriot Act, roll back the executive branch's surveillance authority, force the release of Guantanamo detainees or remand them to the normal criminal-justice system, impose even greater restrictions on interrogations of terrorist suspects, and generally dissipate the sense of urgency that has animated American counterterrorism efforts since 9/11. Under those circumstances, al Qaeda could stage a dismaying resurrection from the grave to which so many analysts have been rushing to consign it.

CIA Director Hayden's warning, buried deep in the *Washington Post* story highlighting his more optimistic comments, is worth heeding:

> We remain worried, and frankly, I wonder why some other people aren't worried, too. . . . The fact that we have kept [Americans] safe for pushing seven years now has got them back into the state of mind where "safe" is normal. Our view is: safe is hard-won, every 24 hours.

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How Not to Repair the World

Hillel Halkin

As ANYONE following the campaign rhetoric of Barack Obama and his supporters will have noticed, this has been a season for "repairing the world." It is also a time, then, for reflecting on the course of an ancient Hebrew expression that is uttered three times a day in their prayers by religiously observant Jews; that plays a minor but interesting role in talmudic discourse; that was transformed into an important concept of Jewish mysticism in the late Middle Ages; that has become a buzz phrase of American Jewish liberalism; and that occurs in close to a quarter of the 40 short essays by a group of American Jewish intellectuals and social activists, all on the Left, appearing in a new book called *Righteous Indignation*.*

Among the topics dealt with by these essays are: "Can Social Justice Save The American Jewish Soul?"; "Rereading Genesis: Human Stewardship of the Earth"; "Toxic Waste and the Talmud"; "Judaism, Oil, and Renewable Energy"; "A Jewish Vision for Economic Justice"; "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: Social Justice and Sexual Values in Judaism"; "Multiracial Jewish Families: A Personal and Political Approach to Justice Politics"; "*Imitatio Dei* and Shared Space: A Jewish Theological Argument for Sharing the Holy Land"; "Once Again: Genocide In Darfur"; and "'Silence is Akin to Assent': Judaism and the War in Iraq."

The Hebrew expression in question—who does not know it by now?—is *tikkun olam*. Traditionally, these were words familiar to the most ordinary Jew, since they occur in a slightly altered form in the *Aleynu* prayer recited at the end of the daily morning, afternoon, and evening services. As translated in the prayer book of the United Synagogue of America, which prefers "perfecting" to "repairing," the second half of the *Aleynu* goes:

> We therefore hope in Thee, O Lord our God, that we may soon behold the glory of Thy might, when Thou wilt remove the abominations from the earth and when all idolatry will be abolished. We hope for the day when the world will be perfected under the Kingdom of the Almighty [*al-ken nekaveh lekha . . . le-taken olam be-malkhut Shaddai*] and all mankind will call upon Thy name. . . . May all the inhabitants of the world perceive and know that unto Thee every knee must bend, every tongue vow loyalty. . . . May they all accept the yoke of Thy kingdom and do Thou rule over them speedily and forevermore. For the Kingdom is Thine and to all eternity Thou wilt reign in glory, as it is written in Thy Torah . . . the Lord shall be King over all the earth; and on that day the Lord shall be One and His name One.

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Its final line taken from the prophet Zechariah, this is a grand prayer, a majestic call for messianic redemption and the acceptance by all mankind of the sovereignty of God. It is odd, therefore, that in an essay in *Righteous Indignation* on "What Does *Tikkun Olam* Actually Mean?" by Jane Kanarek, assistant professor of rabbinics at Hebrew College in Boston, the *Aleynu* goes unmentioned. Perhaps this is because discussing it would have obliged Kanarek to reveal that *tikkun olam* means two quite different things in the Hebrew of antiquity, and that the conflation of them is part of contemporary Jewish liberalism's distortion of Jewish tradition.

As KANAREK points out, the concept of *tikkun olam* is invoked, in a variety of situations, "a total of fifteen times" in the Mishnah, the code of rabbinic law that, together with the commentary on it known as the Gemara, makes up the Talmud. The text in which the phrase occurs most frequently is the tractate of *Gittin*, which deals with divorce law. From this tractate, Kanarek has chosen two illustrations. The first (in my own rather than in Kanarek's translation) reads:

> If a man sends his wife a writ of divorce and then overtakes the bearer of it, or sends him a messenger, saying, "The writ I sent is canceled," it is canceled. If he reaches his wife before the writ's bearer, or sends her a messenger, saying, "The writ I sent you is canceled," then it is also canceled. But if the writ has already been delivered, no cancellation is possible. In former times, the husband could convene a court anywhere to have the cancellation confirmed. But then Rabbi Gamliel the Elder changed this for the sake of [*mipnei*] *tikkun olam*.

The discussion of this passage in the Gemara makes clear the reason for Rabbi Gamliel's ruling. Once upon a time, if a husband who was separated from his wife and living at a distance from her sent her a writ of divorce with a messenger and then changed his mind and sent a second, faster messenger to abort the first's mission, the divorce was canceled. If, however, the second messenger failed to overtake the first in time and the writ was delivered to the woman, the divorce took effect—unless, that is, the husband had already convened a rabbinical court to declare the divorce null and void. And yet if he had done so, the danger existed that the woman, unaware of the court's action, might mistakenly believe herself divorced and remarry another man with whom she would live in sin and have illegitimate children. To prevent this from happening, Rabbi Gamliel amended the law, "for the sake of *tikkun olam*," to require the husband to convene the court in the wife's place of residence, thus ensuring that she would know of its decision.

Not all of the cases of *tikkun olam* in *Gittin* have to do with divorce. Kanarek's second illustration is this:

> For the sake of *tikkun olam*, hostages must not be ransomed for more than their normal price. Nor, for the sake of *tikkun olam*, must hostages be helped to escape.

In this case the principle is that, if a Jew is being held for ransom by highwaymen, pirates, or kidnappers, his family, friends, or community must not pay an exorbitantly high sum to free him even if they can afford it. This is because, while there is no basis in Mosaic law for prohibiting such an action, its effect would be to jack up the price of releasing future hostages and encourage attempts to seize more of them. Similarly, even if it is possible to arrange for a Jewish hostage's escape, it is forbidden to do so, because the conditions under which other hostages are held will then be worsened to prevent more escapes.

Kanarek comments on this as follows:

> In the world of the Talmud, we cannot totally prevent the taking of captives. However, that reality does not imply powerlessness. Rather, existent law must be recalibrated to aim at the formation of a better world. . . . The Mishnah and Talmud help us ask the big structural questions, forcing us to focus on underlying causes of suffering and to address them—and they also remind us that the goal of *tikkun olam* is not necessarily the world's perfection. As *Pirkei Avot* [*The Ethics of the Fathers*] tells us, "It is not upon you to finish the task, nor are you free to desist from it." . . . [*T*]*ikkun olam* means Jewish social justice. It means having a large vision of the world as it ought to be, and working through and with the Jewish tradition to achieve that vision.

THE TALMUD's approach to the ransoming of hostages is indeed "structural." But Kanarek glosses rather blithely over the question of suffering. True, reduce the profitability of kidnapping and fewer people will be kidnapped in the long run. In the short run, however, *tikkun olam* calls for an *increase* in suffering, since it condemns Jewish hostages to continued imprisonment and enjoins their families and friends, who could free them, to exercise an excruciating self-restraint in the public interest. In-

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deed, "for the sake of the public interest," rather than for "the sake of repairing the world," might be a better translation of the Mishnaic term.

It is odd, too, that in a book devoted entirely to Judaism's bearing on contemporary social and political issues, Kanarek's contribution totally ignores the truly impressive relevance of this passage. Hostage-taking, after all, is not some quaint ancient custom that has passed from the world. For the past two years, an Israeli soldier has been held captive by Hamas in Gaza, and two more (if still alive) are being held by Hizballah in Lebanon. All this time, Israel's government and public have agonizingly debated the price to be paid for their release—a price that has indeed climbed steeply over the years, and that now stands at an exchange rate of hundreds of Palestinian terrorists for every Israeli.

It would thus seem that Israel, in its understandable anxiety to redeem its citizens and relieve the distress of their families, has been unmindful of the sort of *tikkun olam* spoken of by the Mishnah. One would think, at the very least, that Kanarek would have remarked on this and on how a more frugal policy of paying for the freedom of Israelis with convicted Palestinians, many of whom have returned to terrorism after their release, would be in line with the Mishnah's recommendation. And yet she is silent.

And so she is also forced to be silent about the contradiction between the prophetic *tikkun olam* of the *Aleynu* and the Mishnaic *tikkun olam* of the rabbis, which embody opposite conceptions of change. One—whose goal *is* the world's perfection—is sweepingly utopian and looks forward to a radical transformation in the religious behavior and social relationships of all mankind. The other is cautiously pragmatic and concerned with the management of Jewish reality. (That *tikkun olam* in the Mishnah involves Jewish reality alone is obvious, since even when universal principles are involved, the rabbis' ability to enforce them did not extend beyond Jews.) The first *tikkun olam* is based on the anticipation of a new spiritual consciousness; the second, on the permanence of human nature as we know it.

It can be argued, of course, that the greater and the lesser *tikkun olam*, as they might be called, are complementary, one expansively setting out the final goal and the other tracing a laborious path to it; the first proclaiming the round sum to be striven for and the second counting out the small change by which this sum might be reached in a pilot project involving a single people. But such harmonization is facile, since *tikkun olam* as the perfecting of the world and *tikkun olam* as the public interest of the Jewish people are not always mutually consistent.

To return to the case of hostages, the public interest, as conceived of by the Mishnah, is necessarily imperfect. It involves the difficult task of balancing one set of justified demands against another, the welfare of the community against the happiness or grief of individuals, and it mandates private grief where the public interest requires it. So it is with most laws. They help some by hurting others. It is only in utopia that no one gets hurt at all.

THERE IS a third traditional conception of *tikkun olam*. This comes from the 16th-century school of Jewish mysticism known as Lurianic Kabbalah, with its great cosmic drama of a world that is quite literally broken and in need of repair from its inception. At the very moment of creation, according to Lurianic theory, a universe designed to be perfect fractured like a faulty pot, and the divine light it was designed to contain leaked out, as it were, into the blackness of chaos. From this darkness, it is the mission of every Jew to retrieve the multitude of fallen sparks that must be restored to their source for all to be made whole again.

In its fashion, the Lurianic *tikkun* combines aspects of the visionary *tikkun* of the prayer book and the pragmatic *tikkun* of the Mishnah. While it calls for mending the entire cosmos, it holds that this must be done incrementally through the efforts of every Jew. These efforts, in Lurianic Kabbalah, are strictly spiritual, involving prayer, religious ritual, and meditation.

It was not, however, the spiritual aspect of the Lurianic *tikkun olam* but the potential for reinterpreting it politically that appealed to the imagination of Michael Lerner, an ex-student radical of the 1960's who in 1986 founded a magazine called *Tikkun*. Under Lerner's editorship, *Tikkun* embraced social activism and "progressive" politics, frequently sided against Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians, and was largely responsible for transplanting the expression *tikkun olam* from the esoteric soil of Jewish scholarship and liturgy to the wider field of American Jewish discourse, from which it has propagated itself in the vocabulary of liberal politics and in the campaign oratory of Barack Obama. "Repairing the world" is now as much of a Jewish contribution to the American language as are chutzpah, schmooze, and schmaltz.

And as repairmen—so the 40 essays in *Righteous Indignation* make clear—Jews have their work cut out for them. There appears to be nothing wrong

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with this world that Judaism does not command us to fix, and nothing needing fixing about which it does not have something to say.

The environment? "The classical Jewish source on conservation," we are told by Shana Starobin, a student in environmental management and public policy at Duke University,

> is the passage in Deuteronomy that introduces the commandment *ba'al tashkhit* [sic! it is *bal tashkhit*] (literally, "do not destroy"), forbidding needless waste and destruction: "When in your war against a city, you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down." . . . The principle of *ba'al tashkhit* affirms that our consciousness must be directed toward resources great and small, that the earth and its gifts are not ours to destroy.

Toxic waste? The laws of the Talmud, we learn from Jeremy Benstein, associate director of the Heschel Center for Environmental Learning and Leadership,

> regulate not only injury or harm inflicted by a person or their livestock on another person or their property, but also misuse of the environment as a cause of damages to others. If I dig or uncover a pit in the public domain, I am liable for damages that may ensue. Similarly if I place a jug or barrel (or thorns or broken glass) in a communal place and someone is injured. . . . It is not a far cry from the menace of air pollution and the leaky toxic dumps of our day.

The global AIDS crisis? "The medieval Jewish philosopher Maimonides," say Jacob Feinspan and Julia Greenberg of the American Jewish World Service,

> wrote that not only are we permitted to break other commandments to save a life, but that if we fail to act, then we ourselves have transgressed. . . . It is an unsettling fact that there are three times as many HIV-positive people in the world as there are Jews. By raising up their collective voices to say "Let our people live," the HIV-positive community is leading a new Exodus.

Transgenderism and sex change? Elliot Rose Kukla, a formerly female Reform rabbi, informs us that the Talmud has a gender category called the *tumtum* (in reality, the Talmud's term for someone born with undeveloped or undifferentiated sexual organs) that provides a "spiritual home" to anyone like himself who "can't or won't conform" to "modern binary gender" classifications. The *tumtum*, Kukla writes, is "a spiritual resource of our tradition."

AND SO it goes. Health care, labor unions, public-school education, feminism, abortion rights, gay marriage, globalization, U.S. foreign policy, Darfur: on everything Judaism has a position—and, wondrously, this position just happens to coincide with that of the American liberal Left.

If it is easy to caricature most of the essays in *Righteous Indignation*, this is because so many of them caricature themselves. They represent the ultimate in that self-indulgent approach, so common in non-Orthodox Jewish circles in the United States today, that treats Jewish tradition not as a body of teachings to be learned from but as one needing to be taught what it is about by those who know better than it does what it *should* be about. Judaism has value to such Jews to the extent that it is useful, and it is useful to the extent that it can be made to conform to whatever beliefs and opinions they would have even if Judaism had never existed.

This is not to say that Jewish tradition has no position on any of the issues discussed in *Righteous Indignation*. The most cogent and dispassionate contribution to the book, "A Jewish View of Embryonic Stem Cell Research" by Elliott Dorff, professor of philosophy at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles, argues persuasively for the halakhic permissibility of such research under certain conditions. Dorff specifies what these conditions are and leaves the reader feeling that tradition has served him as a mentor rather than as a surrogate mother who can be hired to bear any child one wishes. To the extent, moreover, that Dorff's argument is open to qualification or rebuttal on the basis of traditional sources themselves, any such debate would serve further to illuminate the issues and classical Judaism's approach to them.

Jeremy Benstein has a point, too. There is a real parallel between talmudic laws of liability and those brought to bear against latter-day polluters, and a more closely argued essay than Benstein's could have taught us more about this matter.

About other matters, however, it would be stretching things to say that there is a definable Jewish point of view. There is nothing amounting to a coherent approach in Judaism toward protecting or not protecting the natural environment, and Shana Starobin's ecological exegesis is downright dishonest, since her citation from Deuteronomy deliberately leaves out the verse, "But the trees

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which you know are not trees for food, you shall destroy and cut them down; and you shall make bulwarks [with them] against the city that makes war with you until it is subdued." Indeed, if one were to construct an environmental policy on the slender base of Deuteronomy, it would have to be that the Bible sanctions the destruction, for utilitarian ends like making siege fortifications, of whatever in nature is not, like fruit trees, of direct benefit to mankind.

In still other cases, Jewish tradition is unequivocally opposed to the values that the essayists in *Righteous Indignation* put into its mouth. However many may be the arguments for feminism, the authority of Judaism, which has insisted throughout its history on male dominance and a strict separation of functions between the sexes, is not one of them; just as homosexuality, let alone same-sex marriage, is by any traditional Jewish standard one of the "abominations" that the *Aleynu* prayer would have removed from the earth. "We must be exegetical warriors," writes Melissa Weintraub, another contributor to *Righteous Indignation*. "We must forcefully weave our values out of the fabric of our living traditions." Forcefully, indeed! To reject a tradition as no longer tenable for one's times can be a form of respect for it. To coerce it into the service of contemporary causes deeply offensive to it is to treat it with contempt.

"It is critical to recognize how central social justice is to Jewish consciousness," writes Sidney Schwarz of the Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values in *Righteous Indignation*'s opening essay. He is, of course, right. In Mosaic law, in biblical prophecy, and in rabbinic jurisprudence alike, the idea that God is well-served by decent and equitable relations among human beings is basic. This is not an invention of American Jewish liberalism, nor of the German Reform and Jewish socialist movements that preceded it and bequeathed to it many of their attitudes.

But there are different conceptions of what social justice is and requires, within Judaism no less than outside of it. In stating that the "prophetic legacy is why the Jewish people were put on this earth . . . to be agents for the repair of the entire world," Schwarz dismisses most of post-biblical Jewish history. For, to a great extent, rabbinic Judaism, though it never openly admitted as much, developed as a means of containing and redirecting the prophetic legacy, whose grand vision of a utopian *tikkun olam* had brought the Jewish people to the verge of ruin.

Rabbinic Judaism emerges into the light of history toward the end of the period of the Second Temple, which was destroyed in the great revolt against Rome of 67-70 C.E. This revolt, and the similarly failed Bar-Kokhba rebellion of 132-135 C.E., were Jewish catastrophes of a magnitude that was not to be repeated until the Holocaust. When they were over, the Jews of Palestine had lost their temple, their last vestiges of independence, hundreds of thousands of lives, and a large number of their homes and villages, and had been banished from Jerusalem, to which they would not return in significant numbers for nearly two millennia.

The root cause of this was precisely the prophetic legacy. It was the apocalyptic messianism of the biblical prophets, particularly the later ones, that encouraged the Jews of Palestine to embark on two courageous but hopeless adventures that challenged the military might of the Roman Empire. The same Zechariah whose words conclude the *Aleynu*, and who cried out in the name of social justice, "Execute true judgment, show mercy and compassion every man to his brother, oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor," envisioned a great military battle in Jerusalem between Jews and Gentiles in which "the Lord will smite all the people who have fought against Jerusalem," after which "it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts." The great battle he foresaw indeed took place, but God did not smite the Roman legions.

The rabbis of the period after the destruction of the Temple and the collapse of the Bar-Kokhba rebellion had to rally a beaten and demoralized people. Jewish messianism—the greater *tikkun olam*—had failed on a colossal scale. It was a rabbinic insight to grasp that such a people did not need more and better visions, as Jane Kanarek thinks it does today. It needed laws, organization, authority, routines, a regulating system of halakha (a literal translation of which might be "a way of doing things") to repair the destruction wrought by the anarchy of dreams. It needed the lesser *tikkun olam*, a conception of the public interest.

And this was necessarily a conception of the *Jewish* public interest. Classical rabbinic thought represents a turning-away not only from utopian thinking about humanity but from the notion that it is the Jews' task to help save humanity—except, that is, insofar as it is their task to build a so-

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ciety that the rest of humanity might some day wish to emulate.

In this, it must be said, the rabbis had key sections of the Bible on their side. When one reads the Five Books of Moses, one is struck by how God changes His mind in them. Up to the time of the Flood, He chooses to work with the entire human race and fails. It is too ambitious a project even for Him. The conclusion He draws is that it is better to start again and to start small, and slowly to expand from there on firm foundations: first Noah, then Abraham, then the other Patriarchs, then Jacob's twelve sons, then the twelve tribes of Israel, then the giving to them of a Law at Sinai that they will need to take their time learning to understand and obey.

Meanwhile, the Pentateuch implies, humanity can wait. This is very much the attitude of normative rabbinic Judaism—but not of the prophets, who have no patience with an unredeemed world.

Of course, no period of exilic Jewish history, even the most rabbinically normative, has ever lacked messianic expectancy. Throughout the Exile, rabbinic pragmatism and prophetic utopianism existed side by side in a state of collaborative tension: the one the reality, the other the dream; the first entailing the practical regulation of the innumerable contradictions of daily life, the second representing the faith in a future in which all contradictions would be resolved. This collaboration was only disrupted in times of historical crisis in which, in what is known in Hebrew as *d'hikat ha-ketz*, "the forcing of the end," the "some day" of normative Judaism became the "now" of messianic ferment and the dream rose up to challenge the reality.

This happened when Christianity broke away from Judaism. It happened again in the great messianic eruption of the Lurianically-inspired Sabbatian movement of the mid-17th century—the debacle of which, while leading to the rabbinic repression of messianism in Jewish life, only heightened its unconscious pressures. Ultimately, for many modern Jews, these found their release in the two secular movements of revolutionary socialism and Zionism. The course run by the former in Soviet Russia and elsewhere needs no comment: determined to bring about heaven on earth, it created a hell. Yet its logic was impeccable: men are perfectible; if they refuse to be perfected, that is their own fault; hence, they must be whipped until they stop refusing.

As for Zionism, its fate still hangs in the balance. Early secular Zionism had a strong utopian streak. Many Jews raised in observant homes turned to it after losing their religious faith because it reproduced for them, in secular form, the templates of Jewish thought and feeling that they knew from the prayer book and the synagogue, foremost among them the hope for messianic deliverance; in the land of Israel, they believed, they would construct the perfect society that Jews living under Gentile yoke in the Diaspora could not achieve.

Yet the collapse in secular Israel of this belief has been accompanied by a new historical outbreak, in some of the ranks of the settler movement and its supporters, of the religious messianism of which secular Zionism was a sublimation—an outbreak that, if it is not successfully subdued, could lead to consequences as fateful as did the two uprisings against Rome. Threatened on the secular Left by the cynicism and nihilism that follow the failure of all utopian projects, Israel is today threatened on the religious Right by a belief like Zechariah's that God will come to its rescue no matter how much it disregards the international community or deepens its entanglement with a Palestinian people from whom it needs to extricate itself. Its future depends on the same ability to re-channel the greater *tikkun olam* of Redemption into the lesser *tikkun olam* of the Jewish public interest that the rabbis set to work on articulating 2,000 years ago.

THE JEWISH public interest is not a concept that plays a role in any of the 40 essays in *Righteous Indignation*. Just as the authors of these essays take almost no interest in the state of Israel, apart from chiding it for its various alleged faults of racism, religious intolerance, militarism, and so forth, so they take almost no interest in the American Jewish community except insofar as it is prepared to act outside of itself. They want world repair—and they want it now. An end to environmental exploitation! An end to economic injustice! An end to sexual inequality! An end to war! And since the end will not come of itself, let Jews go out into the world and force it.

What is entirely missing from the book and its righteously indignant authors is the slightest sense of the world's complexity or of the fact that repairing almost anything can involve breaking something else. Yes, it is possible to reduce global warming significantly—but only at the cost of reducing standards of living around the world, including those of the poor. It is possible to let homosexuals marry and raise children like heterosexuals—but only by making heterosexuals wonder what is the point of marrying and raising children. It is possible not to go to war—but only by condemning the people of Iraq to life under a barbaric and aggres-

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sive dictatorship, and by continuing to condemn the people of Darfur to an indescribable misery that only military force can put an end to. There are few cost-free solutions to anything.

This is something that those who bandy the phrase *tikkun olam* might be expected to be aware of. They might, one would think, have learned something from Hillel the Elder.

In the same Mishnah of *Gittin*, there is brief mention of the earliest of rabbinic rulings for the sake of *tikkun olam*. This is the one that has come to be known as the *pruzbul* of Hillel the Elder. Hillel lived while the Temple was still standing, and *pruzbul* is the Hebrew form of the Greek words *pros boulè*, "at the office of the counsel of law." An explanation of the term is found in the Mishnah of *Shevi'it* that deals with the seventh year of the septennial cycle—a year in which the Jewish farmer in the land of Israel was commanded by the Bible to let his land lie fallow and the Jewish creditor to cancel or release all debts.

The biblical statute, found in Deuteronomy, says:

> And this is the manner of the release. Every creditor that lends whatsoever unto his neighbor shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbor or of his brother, because it is called the Lord's release.

The *pros boulè* or *pruzbul* that Hillel the Elder ordained was a way of circumventing this cancellation of debt. As described in *Shevi'it*, the technique involved a procedure whereby the creditor would turn to a court of rabbinical judges and authorize it to collect his debt for him *after* the seventh year had passed. The court could do this without technically violating the biblical commandment because the latter required the creditor, personally, to cancel the debt; a third party to which the collection had been entrusted would not be so constrained. In this fashion, the biblical law was effectively nullified.

What made Hillel the Elder do this? The Mishnah of *Shevi'it* tells us: "When he saw that Jews were not lending each other money, and were thus violating the commandment, 'Beware there not be a thought in your wicked heart,' he enacted the *pruzbul*." The "commandment" referred to here comes from the same passage in Deuteronomy and goes, in full:

> Beware that there not be a thought in your wicked heart saying, the seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and your eye be evil against your poor brother, and you give him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against you, and it be a sin unto you.

In other words, foreseeing that wealthy individuals would be reluctant to lend their money to the poor as the seventh year approached, the Bible commanded them to lend it anyway. Yet Hillel, seeing that the wealthy were disregarding this injunction and depriving the poor of badly needed loans, changed the biblical law to ensure that money would be lent by providing a way of recovering it.

This was a watershed in the evolution of Judaism. The biblical law of debt-cancellation is motivated by a deep concern, which runs through the Mosaic code and the prophets, for the poor, who are to be periodically forgiven by their creditors in order to prevent their becoming hopelessly mired in debt. One could not imagine a more utopian piece of social legislation. But this, as Hillel the Elder realized, was precisely the problem with it: the regulation was having the paradoxical consequence of only making life for the poor harder by preventing them from borrowing at all.

It is not irrelevant to mention in this context that Hillel knew what poverty was. The story is told of him in the Talmud that once, as a young man, unable to pay the watchman who admitted him for a fee to the study house in which the great sages Shemaiah and Avtalion were teaching, he climbed onto the roof to listen to their lesson through the roof beams and nearly froze to death when he was buried there by a snowstorm.

Hillel was thus well aware of the anguish of the man beset by worry that he has to return a loan he does not have the means to make good on, and of how miraculous a deliverance it would be if, at the last moment, the seventh year would arrive and relieve that man of his distress. He could not lightly have undertaken to abolish the prospect of such deliverance, and he certainly must have realized that his *pruzbul*, enabling the collection of a debt after the seventh year, would cause some proponents of social justice to find him morally callous.

The words in *Gittin*, "Hillel enacted a *pruzbul* for the sake of *tikkun olam*," do not compare in sublimity with the prophet Isaiah's declaration, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." And yet they reflect no less a passionate caring for the Jewish people. So should a concern for the Jewish public interest today.

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Why Iraq Was Inevitable

Arthur Herman

According to an April 2008 poll in *U.S. News & World Report*, fully 61 percent of American historians agree that George W. Bush is the worst President in our history. Some of these scholars cite the President's position on the environment, or on taxes, or on the economy. For most, though, the chief qualification for obloquy lies in Bush's decision to go to war in Iraq.

In this, of course, the historians are hardly alone: five years after the launching of Operation Iraqi Freedom, both the mainstream media and America's political elites treat the Iraq war as a disaster virtually without precedent in our national experience. But while politicians and journalists are not necessarily expected to be adepts of the long view, for professional historians the long view is a defining necessity. As the English historian F.W. Maitland wrote more than a century ago, "It is very hard to remember that events that are long in the past were once in the future." Hard it may be, but the job of historians is not only to remember it but to judge events accordingly.

In this light—that is, in light of what was actually known at the time about Saddam Hussein's actions and intentions, and in light of what was added to our knowledge through his post-capture interrogations by the FBI—the decision to go to war takes on a very different character. The story that emerges is of a choice not only carefully weighed and deliberately arrived at but, in the circumstances, the one moral choice that any American President *could* make.

Had, moreover, Bush failed to act when he did, the consequences could have been truly disastrous. The next American President would surely have faced the need, in decidedly less favorable circumstances, to pick up the challenge Bush had neglected. And since Bush's unwillingness to do the necessary thing might rightly have cost him his second term, that next President would probably have been one of the many Democrats who, until March 2003, actually saw the same threat George Bush did.

It is too often forgotten, not least by historians, that George W. Bush did not invent the idea of deposing the Iraqi tyrant. For years before he came on the scene, removing Saddam Hussein had been a priority embraced by the Democratic administration of Bill Clinton and by Clinton's most vocal supporters in the Senate:

> Saddam Hussein must not be allowed to threaten his neighbors or the world with nuclear arms, poison gas, or biological weapons. . . . Other countries possess weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. With Saddam, there is one big difference: he has used them.

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> Not once, but repeatedly. . . . I have no doubt today that, left unchecked, Saddam Hussein will use these terrible weapons again.

These were the words of President Clinton on the night of December 16, 1998 as he announced a four-day bombing campaign over Iraq. Only six weeks earlier, Clinton had signed the Iraq Liberation Act authorizing Saddam's overthrow—an initiative supported unanimously in the Senate and by a margin of 360 to 38 in the House. "Iraqis deserve and desire freedom," Clinton had declared. On the evening the bombs began to drop, Vice President Al Gore told CNN's Larry King:

> You allow someone like Saddam Hussein to get nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, chemical weapons, biological weapons. How many people is he going to kill with such weapons? . . . *We are not going to allow him to succeed.* [emphasis added]

What these and other such statements remind us is that, by the time George Bush entered the White House in January 2001, the United States was *already* at war with Iraq, and in fact had been at war for a decade, ever since the first Gulf war in the early 1990's. (This was literally the case, the end of hostilities in 1991 being merely a cease-fire and not a formal surrender followed by a peace treaty.) Not only that, but the diplomatic and military framework Bush inherited for neutralizing the Middle East's most fearsome dictator had been approved by the United Nations. It consisted of (a) regular UN inspections to track and dispose of weapons of mass destruction (WMD's) remaining in Saddam's arsenal since the first Gulf war; (b) UN-monitored sanctions to prevent Saddam from acquiring the means to make more WMD's; and (c) the creation of so-called "no-fly zones" over large sections of southern and northern Iraq to deter Saddam from sending the remnants of his air force against resisting Kurds and Shiite Muslims.

The problem, as Bill Clinton discovered at the start of his second term, was that this "containment regime" was collapsing. By this point Saddam was not just the brutal dictator who had killed as many as two million of his own people and used chemical weapons in battle against Iran (and in 1988 against Iraqis themselves). Nor was he just the regional aggressor who had to be driven out of Kuwait in 1991 by an international coalition of armed forces in Operation Desert Storm. As Clinton recognized, Saddam's WMD programs, in combination with his ties to international terrorists, posed a direct challenge to the United States.

In a February 17, 1998 speech at the Pentagon, Clinton focused on what in his State of the Union address a few weeks earlier he had called an "unholy axis" of rogue states and predatory powers threatening the world's security. "There is no more clear example of this threat," he asserted, "than Saddam Hussein's Iraq," and he added that the danger would grow many times worse if Saddam were able to realize his thoroughly documented ambition, going back decades and at one point close to accomplishment, of acquiring an arsenal of nuclear as well as chemical and biological weapons. The United States, Clinton said, "simply cannot allow this to happen."

BUT HOW to prevent it? An opportunity arose later the same year. In October 1998, Saddam threw out ten Americans who were part of a UN inspection team, and on the last day of the month announced that he would cease all cooperation with UNSCOM, the UN inspection body. On December 15, UNSCOM's director, Richard Butler, reported that Iraq was engaged in systematic obstruction and deception of the internationally mandated inspection regime. Although the UN hesitated to invoke the technical term "material breach," which would almost certainly have triggered a demand for a response with force by the world body, Clinton himself was determined to act. He had already received a letter from a formidable list of U.S. Senators, including fellow Democrats Carl Levin, Tom Daschle, and John Kerry, urging him to "respond effectively"—with air strikes if necessary—to the "threat posed by Iraq's refusal to end its WMD programs." After consulting with Great Britain and other allies, Clinton ordered Butler to pull out the remaining inspectors. On December 16, he launched Operation Desert Fox.

For four days, American and British planes and cruise missiles bombarded Iraqi sites in an effort to degrade Saddam's programs. The key objective was to knock out communication-and-control networks—and in this, a Clinton official would assert, Desert Fox "exceeded expectations." But the attacks did virtually nothing to destroy facilities suspected of housing weapons, most of which were in unknown locations. The only way to find out where they might be was by reintroducing UN inspectors, something Saddam now adamantly refused to permit.

Thus, in the end, Desert Fox proved a failure, not because of insufficient American firepower but because of Saddam's defiance—and because of a lack of forceful follow-up. True, passage of the Iraq

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Liberation Act meant that the United States now had a regime-change resolution on the books and was providing a certain amount of money and aid for covert internal action against Saddam. True, too, Vice President Al Gore was a particularly strong supporter of these initiatives. But in the wake of Desert Fox, Saddam had conducted his own violent crackdown on potential opposition figures, which meant there was no hope for Iraqis to retake their country without massive outside help.

As 1999 dawned, the choices narrowed. Inspections had failed. So had air strikes and covert action. So had international trade sanctions, which imposed a new level of misery on the Iraqi people without putting any pressure on Saddam himself. The UN's Oil-for-Food Program, created in 1996 in order to allow Iraq to sell some of its oil in exchange for food and other necessary supplies, appeared to be still another failure: Iraqis continued to starve, while Saddam seemed to grow only richer.

AND SO, "starting in early 1999," as Kenneth Pollack, an official in Clinton's National Security Council, would later recount, "the Clinton administration began to develop options to overthrow Saddam's regime."

A plan for an actual land invasion of Iraq had been drawn up a few years earlier under the stewardship of Colin Powell, then the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was updated after Desert Fox. Although (Pollack writes) "no one thought the U.S. public would support such an invasion," this was now beginning to seem the only option.

Concurring with this judgment was Scott Ritter, an American who had served on the UN's weapons-inspection term and had become notorious for his aggressive approach to his job. In testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in late 1998, Ritter castigated the Clinton White House for failing to confront Saddam with the threat of invasion. This hardly endeared him to the President, but it did win him two warm allies in the Senate. One was the Republican John McCain. The other was the Democrat John Kerry, who outspokenly declared that since Saddam clearly intended "to build WMD's no matter what the cost," America "must be prepared to use force to achieve its goals."

But nothing would happen in 1999. At the end of the year, the UN passed Resolution 1284—an effort to get Saddam to accept a new inspection regime, called UNMOVIC, in exchange for lifting sanctions on all goods for civilian use. Yet, weak as the resolution was, it led to a split in the Security Council, with four members—including France, Russia, and China—abstaining from the vote. That split would become permanent. By 2000, life at the Security Council would turn into a constant battle of wills, with the U.S. and Great Britain in one corner and Russia, France, Germany, and China in another. Although George W. Bush would later come to be blamed for wrecking the coalition that had fought the first Gulf war, the reality is otherwise: the wreck occurred three years before he became President.

All the same, as the military historian John Keegan has pointed out, Resolution 1284 did signal the beginning of the end of Saddam Hussein. By refusing to re-admit inspectors, even under a relaxed sanctions regime, Saddam made it unmistakably clear that only a credible threat of military force would make him budge, and only the exercise of military force would ever get him out.

Unfortunately, by this time Clinton had lost whatever limited appetite for armed confrontation he might earlier have entertained. According to Pollack, the lengthy campaign to dislodge Slobodan Milosevic in Kosovo had given the White House a taste of might go wrong in open-ended military operations, and Clinton's advisers "were not looking to back into a war with Saddam the way they had backed into one with Milosevic." Besides, the proposed invasion plan called for 400,000-500,000 troops and six months of laborious preparation, which would stretch to the breaking point an American military that, thanks to Clinton-era cuts, was now little more than half the size of the one that had fought Desert Storm.

In his final year in office, Clinton decided that his contribution to Middle East peace would lie not in the removal of Saddam Hussein but in a grand attempt to resolve the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel. With this, he missed his last chance to deal forcefully with the man he was publicly committed to overthrowing. Worse, by focusing his energies on a futile effort to placate Yasir Arafat, he diverted American attention not only from Saddam but from the mounting challenge represented by Osama bin Laden—not to mention the possibility that these two sinister figures might some day find common ground. As Clinton's administration ended and George W. Bush's began, Iraqi defectors were claiming that Saddam had set up camps in which terrorists connected with bin Laden were training to attack the United States.

CONFRONTING THE same threat faced by the Clinton administration, and the same policy predicament, the incoming Bush team arrived at the same conclusion—namely, to do nothing.

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Bush's advisers, like Clinton's, were split. In the Defense Department, some, like Paul Wolfowitz, seemed (according to Pollack) "obsessed" with getting rid of Saddam—though in point of historical fact Wolfowitz's position was not strikingly dissimilar to Al Gore's. For others, like Secretary of State Colin Powell, Iraq "simply did not measure up" to China or Russia or Europe on the scale of international importance.

Most, like Vice President Cheney, were in the middle. They saw plainly enough that containment was not working, and they also saw the long-term benefits of regime change. But they recognized as well that (to quote Pollack again) "toppling Saddam was going to be difficult, potentially costly, and risky." The net result was that by the summer of 2001, despite the almost complete collapse of the sanctions regime, "it had become clear that the administration was not going to pursue a radically new approach to Iraq."

Then came September 11. A hitherto obscure terrorist threat emanating from the Arab-Muslim world had reached out to commit mass murder against Americans on their own soil, and in so doing had changed everyone's priorities. Hillary Clinton, the new junior Senator from New York, put it this way in an interview with Dan Rather two days after 9/11, using starkly confrontational language of the sort for which President Bush would soon be pilloried: "Every nation has to be either for us, or against us. Those who harbor terrorists, or who finance them, are going to pay a price."

As for the administration, it had come to understand something else—namely, that its responsibility extended beyond the clear and present danger presented by nations, like Afghanistan, guilty of harboring terrorists. It had to prepare for future threats as well. In that regard, Iraq moved quickly to the head of the list.

As Douglas Feith explains in *War and Decision*, the recently published memoir of his days as Under Secretary for Policy in Donald Rumsfeld's Defense Department, there were several reasons why a post-9/11 strategy had to focus on Saddam Hussein. First among them was Saddam's ties to terrorist groups, of which the Clinton administration had been well aware and had repeatedly cited. Although no evidence existed that Saddam had been involved in al Qaeda's attack on New York and Washington—and no Bush official ever asserted otherwise—the White House learned after the liberation of Afghanistan that Abu Musab Zarqawi, one of al Qaeda's key operatives, had found safe haven in Iraq. There was also some evidence (cited by General Tommy Franks in his own memoir, *American Soldier*), that Zarqawi "had been joined there by other al-Qaeda leaders."

In March 2002, a *New Yorker* article described the presence in Afghanistan of a radical Islamic group, Ansar al-Islam, whose members were being trained in al-Qaeda camps but being paid through Saddam Hussein's intelligence service—suggesting a connection "far closer than previously thought." From other intelligence sources it appeared that Zarqawi was in fact heading Ansar al-Islam, and that its members were training for WMD use against Western countries. Finally, in September 2002, the CIA released a report, *Iraqi Support for Terrorism*, asserting that "Iraq continues to be a safe haven, transit point, or operational node for groups and individuals who direct violence against the United States."*

We now know, thanks to captured Iraqi documents, that American intelligence seriously *underestimated* the extent of Saddam's ties with terrorist groups of all sorts. Throughout the 1990's, it emerged, the Iraqi intelligence service had worked with Hamas, the Palestine Liberation Front, and Yasir Arafat's private army (Force 17), and had given training to members of Islamic Jihad, the terrorist group that assassinated Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. Saddam also collaborated with jihadists fighting the American presence in Somalia, including some who were members of al Qaeda. It may be that al Qaeda had no formal presence in Iraq itself, but the captured documents show that it did not need such a presence. Saddam was willing to work with any terrorists who targeted the United States and its allies, and he reached out to al-Qaeda-affiliated groups (and vice-versa) whenever the occasion warranted.

SECOND, AS Feith relates, Saddam had the WMD know-how, as well as probable stockpiles, that terrorist groups like al Qaeda might want for future operations. Just weeks before 9/11, a privately sponsored exercise had simulated a smallpox attack on the United States. The results were chilling: more than three million people infected within two months, and one million dead. "Today," declared the official report, "we are ill-equipped to prevent the dire consequences of a biological-weapon at-

* This document would become central to later claims that the administration "manipulated intelligence" for political purposes. But neither the bipartisan Silberman-Robb Commission nor the Senate Intelligence Committee found a single case of such manipulation or, for that matter, of political pressure being put on intelligence analysts. What the analysts reported was sometimes wrong, but not because policymakers made it so.

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tack"—a conclusion that would cast a shadow of apprehension over the post-9/11 Defense Department, as dark as the shadow cast by the anthrax scare that gripped the country after five people received fatal doses in the mail and by the discovery during the invasion of Afghanistan that the Taliban had been experimenting with chemical weapons.

Where would terrorists look to acquire such inefficient but murderous weapons? As far as anyone knew, the place to start would be Saddam's Iraq. UNSCOM had uncovered Saddam's extensive biological-weapons (BW) program, dating back to before Desert Storm, only in 1995. Since then, Iraq claimed to have destroyed its BW stockpile—but there was no proof of this. Similar doubts surrounded Saddam's chemical-weapons (CW) program, of which even bigger stockpiles remained unaccounted for. (In UNSCOM's estimate, there were 1.5 undocumented tons of VX gas alone.) In addition, UNSCOM believed Saddam still possessed clandestine Scud missiles, useful as a delivery system for a chemical attack.

Third was Saddam's declared antipathy toward the United States. In 1993 he had hatched a plot to assassinate his then-nemesis, former President Bush, during a visit by the latter to Kuwait. A "general suspicion" among Clinton-administration officials, in Pollack's words, was that Saddam was also "working on a variety of terrorist contingencies" in the event that the United States ever tried to topple his regime. He was the only world leader who actually applauded the attacks of 9/11.

Finally and most ominously, Saddam was emerging, like a great malignant moth, from the containment regime in place since the end of the first Gulf war. By the end of the 1990's, sanctions had become a joke, proving less a liability to Saddam than an asset in rebuilding his power. In October 2000 a supposedly "contained" Iraq had boldly renewed its military cooperation with Syria, moving divisions to the Syrian border and even deploying troops into Syria itself to put pressure on Israel. Since then, Saddam's attacks on American and British air patrols over Iraq had grown more intense. When General Tommy Franks met with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld after the liberation of Afghanistan, these attacks headed his daily list of challenges. "It would only be a matter of time," Feith writes, "before Iraq was once again engaged in a violent clash with the United States."

With the fall of Afghanistan, moreover, Bush's military planners had become more rather than less nervous about the Iraqi threat. Osama bin Laden's escape from his Tora Bora hideout raised the possibility that he might find safe haven in Baghdad. (Saddam had offered the terrorist leader sanctuary at least once before, after his 1997 expulsion from Sudan.) And as for weapons of mass destruction, on this issue the CIA and its director, George Tenet, still had no doubts, and Tenet's dogmatic certainty on the point was backed up by the UN inspectors themselves.

Since 1998, no inspector had visited Iraq. Huge quantities of chemical WMD's were known to have existed before Desert Storm. Quantities had been destroyed since. How much more was left? Saddam had never made the accounting demanded by the UN. In its absence, the UN's chief weapons inspector, Hans Blix, reasonably inferred that considerable quantities must still have existed.

TODAY WE know that this conviction—which had underlain Clinton's air strikes in 1998 and the UN's desperate efforts to reinsert its inspectors into Iraq, and which was shared by virtually every foreign intelligence service, from the French and Germans to the British and Japanese—was the weakest link in the case for going to war with Iraq. But who was responsible for the misimpression? Some have blamed it on the assurances of former Iraqi exiles, especially Ahmed Chalabi of the Iranian National Congress; their motive was presumably to convince the Bush administration to depose the dictator and put them in charge. A more likely culprit seems to have been another Iraqi exile, Rafid Ahmed Alwan, code-named "Curveball," who arrived in Germany in 1999 telling horrific tales of Saddam's BW arsenal.

Exiles and/or charlatans may indeed have played a part in misleading the CIA and other Western intelligence services. But by far the most important deceiver was Saddam himself. For more than a decade, he had consistently acted like a guilty man, evading inspections and moving trucks from palace to palace in the dead of night. Even his own army officers, Feith writes, believed he was hiding biological and chemical weapons. And as became clear from his post-capture interrogations, this was precisely the impression he intended to convey, assuming that it would be enough in itself to deter not only an American invasion but an insurrection by Iraqi Kurds or Shiites, or even—his most consistent worry—an attack by Iran.

It never seems to have occurred to Saddam that an American President would take him seriously enough to decide that his supposed WMD stockpiles and programs had to be destroyed by any means necessary. But there was nothing unreason-

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able about the President's inference—which was the inference of most American politicians as well. No one knew for sure, just as no one knew what links Saddam might have with al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. If WMD's existed once, they might well still exist; nothing, and certainly not Saddam's behavior, suggested otherwise.

Nor was there any way to know, at least until troops were on the ground. Thus, dealing forthrightly with the issue entailed, first, threatening Iraq with a full-scale land invasion and then, if Saddam refused to back down, launching an actual attack.

Convincing Congress that the United States enjoyed a right of "anticipatory self-defense" against Saddam was hardly a difficult task. On the contrary, in September 2002 the Senate virtually armtwisted Bush into giving it time to pass a new and more specific resolution than the Clinton-era one authorizing regime change in Iraq. In ringing the tocsin, moreover, leading Democrats spoke at least as assertively as leading Republicans. One of them was Charles Schumer:

> Hussein's vigorous pursuit of biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons, and his present and potential future support for terrorist acts and organizations . . . make him a terrible danger to the people of the United States.

Another was Hillary Clinton:

> My position is very clear. The time has come for decisive action to eliminate the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's WMD's.

John Edwards was still another:

> Every day [Saddam] gets closer to his long-term goal of nuclear capability.

Howard Dean, then the governor of Vermont, was of a similar mind:

> There's no question that Saddam Hussein is a threat to the U.S. and our allies.

More than half of Senate Democrats, including John Kerry and Joseph Biden, joined with Republicans in authorizing the President "to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq," and in so doing to enforce all the relevant but ineffectual resolutions passed by the UN Security Council. In the House, 81 Democrats (out of 209 in total) concurred. Later, many would claim that they had been tricked or misled or even lied to. In fact, the vote reflected nothing more than an affirmation of the old Clinton-era position, now urgently reinforced by the experience of 9/11.*

It was, after all, California's Nancy Pelosi who had warned the nation on December 16, 1998, during Operation Desert Fox, that Saddam's "development of WMD technology . . . is a threat to countries in the region." During the House debate in October 2002, Pelosi sounded the same urgent theme, summing up a threat whose imminence the Democrats had been insisting upon for years. "Yes," reiterated the tireless Pelosi, "[Saddam] has chemical weapons. He has biological weapons. He is trying to get nuclear weapons."

That said it all.

AS THE leaves turned in Washington in the fall of 2002, mainstream Democrats were on board with Bush, just as they had been on board with Clinton. The real reluctance for war came from Republican ranks—and from within the administration itself. The most serious dissenter was Secretary of State Colin Powell, together with his assistant Richard Armitage. Both men wanted to find a way to prop up the containment "box" around Saddam without having to resort to drastic military action.

Their hopes, however, were already more than three years out of date. The main feature of the containment regime had become the Oil-for-Food program, set up by the United Nations in 1996 with Clinton-administration approval. Within months, the program had become a spigot of cash for Saddam and his family and cronies. The full extent of the corruption, and the full roster of who paid in and who was paid out, may not be known for decades, if ever. But the overall picture is reasonably clear, thanks again in large part to documents seized in the 2003 invasion.

Saddam had shrewdly realized that vouchers for the sale of his oil might serve as a kind of international currency, distributed by him to favored customers who would be obliged to pay him kickbacks, all out of reach of the scrutiny of the UN. Eventually, UN administrators were brought into the conspiracy as well.† Within a year the program had miraculously restored Saddam's personal wealth and power, even as the Iraqi people continued to suffer. By the time of the U.S. invasion, he

* For a full refutation of the charge that we were "misled" into war, see Norman Podhoretz, "Who Is Lying About Iraq?," in the December 2005 COMMENTARY.

† See Claudia Rosett, "The Oil-for-Food Scam: What Did Kofi Annan Know, and When Did He Know It?," COMMENTARY, May 2004.

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had skimmed at least $21 billion from the program, in addition to the billions made through smuggled oil sales to other Middle East countries, including his old enemy Iran.

The list of recipients of Oil-for-Food vouchers grew to more than 270 names, constituting a Who's Who of slippery international politicians and diplomats—all of whom, needless to say, opposed any talk of military action against Iraq. On the Security Council, Russia, France, and China, key adversaries of U.S. policy toward Iraq going back to Clinton days, were among Saddam's key beneficiaries. Not only was Oil-for-Food the biggest scandal in UN history, it had turned the UN's mandate inside out. A program established to punish a rogue tyrant was systematically making him more powerful; nations that were supposed to be his custodians had become his accomplices; and the institution whose purpose was to protect international order was destroying it.

At the time, though, no one in the Bush administration knew this. That was why, in September 2002, President Bush was willing to yield to Colin Powell and British prime minister Tony Blair and ask the UN for one more resolution, this one explicitly threatening Saddam with military force if he did not finally comply with all the preceding resolutions against him.

What Powell found at the UN astonished even him. At a press conference, the French foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin, shrieked that "nothing! nothing!" justified war—making Powell so angry that, as he would later tell the reporter Bob Woodward, he could barely contain himself. "Any leverage with Saddam was linked directly to the threat of war," Powell recalled, "and the French had just taken the threat off the table." He could not believe the Europeans' stupidity. Neither could the President. But it was not stupidity; it was self-interested duplicity.

THE UN's refusal to hold Saddam accountable had the unintended effect of bringing even Powell into line with the White House. In conversations with Bush, he began to use terms like "mosh pit" and "quagmire" to describe the world body. Still, the decision had been made to go back for another, tougher resolution—something that Bill Clinton in his time had conspicuously not secured—either for Desert Fox or for Kosovo.

In going to the UN, Bush willy-nilly allowed the focus to shift from the threat posed by Saddam to the United States, which would justify anticipatory action in self-defense, to Saddam's defiance of existing UN resolutions, which conferred on the Security Council the right to approve or disapprove of action. Suddenly the salient point at issue was Saddam's actual stockpiles, determining the nature and extent of which had been the UN's focus for more than a decade. This led to a crucial delay of more than six months, from September 2002 until March 2003, a period Saddam duly exploited both to build an international coalition aimed at blocking Security Council action and to prepare his own defensive plans.

The case against Saddam, even by the UN's own rules, was rock solid, and in November 2002 the Security Council did unanimously issue Resolution 1441, ordering him to disarm his WMD's or face "serious consequences." Everyone understood that "serious consequences" meant the use of force, including on Iraqi territory. But the Europeans, determined to thwart the U.S., declined to take it that way. No military action was envisaged, they insisted; the passage of Resolution 1441 was action enough. Large crowds mobilized across Western Europe to denounce the very thought of war.

On November 25, 2002, under the terms of 1441, UN inspectors re-entered Iraq. They came back empty-handed. On December 7, Iraq dumped thousands of pages of documents on UNMOVIC. Even Hans Blix recognized that this mountain of materials, some of them over a decade old, contained nothing to clear up the question of what had happened to Saddam's stockpiles. All the same, Blix asked for time to sift through the document dump, knowing the task would consume months.

As Bob Woodward notes in *Plan of Attack*, his account of the run-up to the war, Bush so far had been "a study in patience." (It is also true that General Franks was not yet ready for offensive operations, and needed time for the buildup of American forces in Kuwait that was the leverage behind the implicit threat of force.) The President held back until Blix's interim report on January 27, 2003, which even the *New York Times* labeled "grim." There was nothing in it to suggest that Iraq had accepted the principle of complying with UN resolutions or intended to take any of the steps that, in Blix's words, "it needs to carry out to win the confidence of the world and to live in peace."

BLIX HIMSELF still held out the hope that, somehow, at some future time, Saddam would yet decide to comply. But his mission was doomed from the start. "UNMOVIC had the impossible task," John Keegan notes, "of proving a negative, that Saddam no longer had forbidden weapons."

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But the burden of proof belonged legally on Saddam himself, as stated in Resolution 1441, and it was his failure to comply with that demand, and not Bush's supposed doctrine of "preemptive war," that triggered the U.S. invasion. What finally forced the Americans' hand was the UN's failure or refusal to acknowledge the very existence of the demand that it itself had made.

The UN's moment of truth came on February 5, 2003, when Powell gave a final presentation of the case against Saddam to the Security Council, with CIA director George Tenet sitting behind him. Powell's 76-minute exercise in destructive analysis documented what everyone knew was the case: that Saddam was in "material breach" of the UN's own stated requirements. That being so, the UN had lost any empirical grounds for declining to take military action. The only question left was whether the Security Council had the moral courage to stand behind its own resolution.

Later, Powell's defenders would charge that he had been tricked or deceived into making the speech—and in retrospect he said he was humiliated by the thought that he had conveyed false or misleading information. In fact, as Feith shows, the speech came at Powell's own suggestion, and before giving it he had ruthlessly winnowed out any evidence he considered shoddy or dubious. Even so, he offered over 100 examples of Saddam's evasion and deceit, evidence based on eyewitness accounts, radio intercepts, and satellite photos. Nor did he hesitate to bring up the al-Qaeda connection as an indicator of possible future horrors along the lines of 9/11. "Ambition and hatred are enough to bring Iraq and al Qaeda together," Powell asserted, and only military action could ensure that they forever remained apart.

His words were wasted. Russia, France, and Germany stood fast against war "under any circumstances." Their intransigence, reinforced by their own secret links to Saddam, doomed any final Security Council vote for action. But Powell's speech did at least confirm the near-unanimity of the official U.S. position. As the late *Washington Post* columnist Mary McGrory wrote the next day, "I can only say he persuaded me, and I was as tough as France to convince." Indeed, even before Powell's speech, Joseph Biden, reacting to Blix's interim report, had summed up the feeling of many Democrats in these words:

> Saddam is in material breach of the latest UN resolution. . . . The legitimacy of the Security Council is at stake, as well as the integrity of the UN. [If] Saddam does not give up those WMD's and the Security Council does not call for the use of force, I think we have little option but to act with a larger group of willing nations, if possible, and alone if we must.

The die was cast.

Operation Iraqi Freedom got under way on March 21, 2003. In October of that year, the Iraqi Survey Group (ISG) reported it was unable to find any of the WMD stockpiles that everyone believed were in Iraq. Still, what the group did find, in the words of its director David Kay, was "dozens of WMD-related program activities and significant amounts of equipment" that Saddam had concealed from Blix's inspectors in 2002: proof, in other words, of Saddam's clear material breach of Resolution 1441.

Of course, this was not the element of the ISG report that attracted the attention of the war's critics. According to the *New York Times*, the ISG's findings supported the view that Bush had "used dubious intelligence to justify his decision to go to war." That was and is false.

While Kay and his ISG inspectors found no WMD's, they did not say there had been none. To the contrary: "My view," Kay stated, is that "Iraq indeed had WMD's" and that smaller stocks still existed on Iraqi territory. Later he told Britain's *Daily Telegraph* that he had found evidence of some WMD's having been moved to Syria before the war. A question mark hangs over that possibility to this day.

In testifying to the Senate, moreover, Kay asserted unequivocally that "the world is far safer with the disappearance and removal of Saddam Hussein," adding that the upper echelons of the Iraqi regime had become divided into two factions: those willing to sell to the highest bidder whatever they knew about manufacturing WMD's and those, including Saddam himself, willing to buy someone else's know-how at equally high prices. Saddam's FBI interrogations would confirm Kay's analysis. There Saddam admitted that he intended to rebuild his WMD programs once he rid himself of the international sanctions imposed after 1991. He knew that WMD's were the key to his future power, just as they had been in the past. Had he been allowed to remain Iraq's dictator, he would have emerged as an even greater international menace than before the Gulf war.

Those who condemn Bush's decision to go to war, bemoan its cost in material and human terms, and deplore the damage it has allegedly done to the American image around the world should consider

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what would have happened if there had been no war. It is not just that millions of Iraqis would still be in the iron grip of Saddam and his police state. The fact is that, by 2002, no inspection regime and no amount of international pressure, no matter how plumped up by yet another UN resolution, would have kept him contained any longer. The Oil-for-Food corruption would have continued to grow unrestrained, finding reliable co-conspirators in Europe and the Middle East. Rising oil prices over the next half-decade would have kept Saddam awash in cash, allowing him to rebuild his military and cement his connections with powers like Syria and Russia. He had called our bluff before; but this time it was no bluff.

Given the logic of the situation, at what point *could* Bush have avoided war? To have taken the military option off the table before going to the UN would have undercut everything his analysts and policy advisers, including at the CIA, had been saying since 9/11—*and* brought howls of protests from leading Democrats in Congress. Doing so after the passage of Resolution 1441 would have made a mockery of the rationale for going to the UN in the first place, and, as Powell explicitly recognized, undermined the resolution itself.

Should we have backed off after the Blix report on January 27, 2003, even as the American troop buildup in Kuwait was in full swing? That would have devastated Bush's reputation as a war leader after his resounding success in Afghanistan, and guaranteed that he would never be more than a one-term President (which may have been the real objective of his critics anyway).

Saddam Hussein had become a virus infecting the international body politic. The leading symptom of that infection was Oil-for-Food—emblematic of a moral anarchy let loose in the world that would prevail as long as Saddam remained in power. That anarchy had destroyed Iraq; eaten away the legitimacy of the United Nations; and almost wrecked NATO. Indeed, it is hard to see how NATO members already embittered by the diplomatic battle in the UN in 2002 could have continued to cooperate militarily in Kosovo or Afghanistan. Nor is it clear that Eastern European nations would want to join a NATO led by a power, the United States, that had displayed such bare-faced unwillingness to stand up to a dangerous dictator.

"MY JOB is to secure America," George Bush told Bob Woodward in 2004. "I also believe that freedom is something people long for." Had he wished, he could also have referred back to the words uttered by President Clinton six years earlier, in February 1998:

> Let's imagine the future. What if [Saddam] refuses to comply, and we fail to act, or take some ambiguous third route? . . . Well, he will conclude that the international community has lost its will. He will then conclude that he can go right on and do more to rebuild an arsenal of devastating destruction. And some day, I guarantee you, he'll use the arsenal.

Whatever one wants to say about the conduct of the Iraq war, *going* to war to remove Saddam Hussein in 2003 was a necessary act. It should and could have been done earlier, had not the Clinton White House, which understood the need, not wasted the opportunity through timidity and bluster. If, after 9/11, Bush had then blinked in his turn, he might indeed have found himself out of office by January 2005, and someone else would have had to tackle the job under much more disadvantageous conditions.

To judge by his unequivocal pronouncements pre-2003, and as improbable as it sounds now, that someone might well have been Al Gore, the erstwhile hawkish Vice President who had championed the Iraq Liberation Act, or indeed John Kerry, who back in 1998 told Scott Ritter that containment of Saddam was not working and that the time had come to use force. If Bush had failed to act, either one of these two men might have come to office in January 2005 publicly prepared to deal with the "gathering threat" that his predecessor had unaccountably allowed to grow larger and closer and ever more virulent.

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Banger Finds Out

A Story

Kelly Cherry

BANGER'S FATHER was not the man whose last name Banger bore. His father was a sweet tryst that lasted the baseball season, and he had left his mother even before she learned she was pregnant. He had been headed down to the coast, looking to strike it rich at the casinos, and Banger's mother would bet that he had not gotten to New Orleans before landing in jail. For about one-tenth of a second, if that long, she had considered an abortion, and then she never thought about it again.

Banger's mother Plummy, despite her name with its suggestion of round vowels and luxe towels, was not a high-class woman; she was a low-down, walk-all-over-me-and-I'll-show-you-how-good-I-can-make-the-soles-of-your-feet-feel kind of a woman. Plummy tended bar at Moon Shots near the Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, and she lived with her twelve-year-old son—he had received his nickname when he was little and had let the screen door bang whenever he came in or went out—in a rickety rented two-story-with-wood-siding.

Huntsville, where Wernher von Braun and his team had settled after World War II, billed itself as Rocket City. At the municipal pool, heated to 90 degrees and cherished by seniors with arthritis, members of the founding families still gossiped in German. Plummy's own father, recruited in the early 1960's, had been an aeronautical engineer from Augsburg. Her mother was an Alabama girl. They had met on the front lines of the civil-rights campaign, her father the foreigner marching, he liked to say, for the first and last time in his life. When she was little, Plummy used to sit on her father's knee while he sang his own German translation of "Oh! Susanna. Oh, don't you cry for me. I come from Alabama with a *banjo* on my knee." Every time he came to the word banjo he hollered it in English and pretended she was a banjo that he was strumming.

Plummy's parents had been kind and cheerful. She was their only child, and they had played Go Fish and Old Maid with her and taken her trick-or-treating on Halloween and kept a photo album on the cover of which her mother had written, in Magic Marker and capital letters, STARRING OUR DAUGHTER. They had kissed her and hugged her and told her they loved her. When she had the measles they drew the shades down and brought her soup and ice cream and gave her a plush toy giraffe as tall as she was. They ooh'ed and ah'ed over the Valentine's Day card she made for them at school and the ashtray she made at camp, though neither of them smoked. They came to every graduation.

She could not understand how she had bungled her life after such a good start. It was not as if she disrespected herself; she respected herself just fine. She supposed she just lacked the will to succeed.

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She had done okay in school, but she didn't work at it. Instead of studying Latin declensions or solving quadratic equations she cheered for her favorites at football practice on weekday afternoons, sang in the school choir—she had a creamy alto voice—hung out with her friends at the Tastee-Freez on summer evenings, and somehow, when she started double-dating, was always the one in the back seat with a boy pleading with her not to stop. The music was stereo, the car was a souped-up convertible, *Saturday Night Fever* was a contagion of the time. The friend in front would go for a walk with the guy in front, wearing the guy's letter sweater, and, in short, Plummy was on the pill and didn't see a reason to stop and didn't want to. She had been easy, especially if alcohol was involved. Nobody joked about her or was mean to her—she was too well liked for that, by both the boys and the girls. She didn't get into trouble, because she was too smart for *that*. But, she supposed, a pattern was established, and it was a pattern in which she was the girl you could count on and would never have to pay back. The opposite of high maintenance, she was no maintenance at all.

After high school she worked in data entry, punching numbers on a keyboard. Her parents had wanted her to go to college but she told them she was tired of studying; they could have pointed out that she had never done much studying, but they didn't. She chewed her nails and painted them with punk flair, messily swabbing brown or blue or green and occasionally even plain old red polish in the center of each. Some days she felt trapped by her job. Other days she felt light and floating and free, something spacey and slightly loony and cosmically effervescent. When she felt like that, she was liable to go dancing.

IN A ROADHOUSE on Route 72 Plummy met Earl Fitts. He was a mechanic in the army. An old burn had puckered the skin at the outer corner of his left eye, making him look like he was smiling even when he wasn't. She kept thinking he was smiling at her. Two days later she woke up sober in Tupelo, married. There was a knock on the door of their motel room. A twin-set of MP's was standing on the rubber welcome mat. Hands cuffed behind his back, Earl kissed her on the cheek before they led him away, down the crumbling concrete portico. He seemed to be smiling, which made her think he liked being married, but she never saw him again. She was divorced and not yet twenty-one.

So, she thought, maybe her parents had had the right idea. She enrolled at the university in Florence—not Italy, as she would explain to the Pentagon types who flew in to consult at Redstone: Florence, *Alabama*, about 60 miles from Huntsville. But the pattern didn't change. That surprised her; she had kind of figured that if she majored in philosophy, she'd absorb some wisdom. Instead, she discovered that life was even more inexplicable than she'd already thought.

The only thing that changed was that she went off the pill because the doctor said her body needed a breather. That was when she met the gambler. At twenty-five, more or less nine months after he had "borrowed" her car to drive to the coast, her body took a deep breath and exhaled, and William, eventually to be known as Banger, appeared, weighing seven pounds two ounces. Plummy not having gotten around to dropping the Fitts, it became, perforce, her son's name.

After Plummy gave birth, she centered her life on her infant son. She was careful not to smother him, made sure to encourage him to try new things and make his own decisions. He reminded her of her father. She had loved her mother, too, but it was her father who never lost faith in her.

Her son was twelve now, smart and good-looking and mannerly and, lately, intrigued by his family history. He had recently taken to rummaging through the souvenirs and family stuff that Plummy had shoved into the upstairs storage closet when they first moved into the house, which had no proper attic. She had always meant to go through the boxes and figure out what was and wasn't worth saving, but there was never a time for this. Either she was exhausted from work, or it was the weekend and the weather was wonderful, the air seductive with the dreamy odors of lilac and lobelia, or the weather was stormy, tornadoes threatening to form, and she called Banger indoors and they played Scrabble or Monopoly. When she asked him what he was doing poking around in the closet, he said he was just curious.

THAT WAS true enough, he thought. He remembered his grandfather as a genial, funny man who had held him on his lap and pretended he was a banjo. He remembered a lean man with a weathered face and large hands who helped him build model airplanes and rockets, who had carried him on his shoulders, who had trolled the back of his ears for quarters that he never failed to find, who was a whiz at Lego and Tinker Toys.

And his father? Banger had asked his mother about him and was thrown into confusion when she explained that he was not the man whose last

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name they shared. His mother's having been married to a guy who'd gone AWOL; the way she referred to his father as the Rambling Gambler: there were things he wanted to know, and one or two other things he would just as soon not find out about until he was older. One of them was if his mother had been, Jesus, a little bit easy. So he'd gotten in the habit of asking about his grandfather instead of his father. It made his mother happy to talk about him, and besides, until he was six his grandfather had been like a father to him. Banger had admired him wildly. He wanted to *be* like his grandfather. He was no kin to Earl Fitts, and he felt no kinship with his jerk of a hit-and-run father. Honey, his mother said to him, if your father had known about you I'm sure he'd have come back, but I didn't know how to get in touch with him. He still thought his father was a jerk.

Plummy told him about the German immigrant who had developed top-secret guidance systems. "He could multiply a three-digit number by a three-digit number in his head," she said, seeming to hold each low-pitched word in her mouth for a moment, savoring it before moving on to the next. She nibbled at the cuticle on her thumb. "He could recite Schiller."

"What about Grandmother?" Banger asked. "Was she smart too?"

"She was smart in a different way," she said.

"What way?" He was a kid who liked to nail things down.

"She was smart enough to say she loved to listen to him recite Schiller."

"In German or English?"

"Oh," Plummy said, "she didn't care. She said it was all Greek to her."

"Mo-o-om." Banger hated it when his mother made him her straight man.

"Sorry," she said, ruffling his hair. He hated *that*, too, at least when she did it in front of his friends; he liked it when they were alone.

When he found the handful of old photos, scissored from an album with the black backing paper still attached, he thought about telling her. And then he thought maybe he'd better not. He'd been opening the taped-down boxes with his jackknife, shuffling the contents, reading old letters and documents. His grandfather's passport was in one of the boxes. Digging deeper, he'd found the photos at the bottom, underneath a stack of technical drawings. He felt his face heat up. He was breathing too fast and swallowing air and when he held the photos up to his face, he inhaled dust and suffered a coughing fit until his throat cleared.

He decided he should think it over before he did anything rash. He was afraid of how his mother might react. She'd be upset. Shit, she'd be heartsick.

But she needed to know, didn't she?

Maybe there was an explanation. He wanted it not to be true. And how *could* it be? He remembered his grandfather, the towers of play blocks in primary colors. Tears overran his eyes before he knew he was going to cry. He wiped them on his sleeve. Snot ran from his nose. He sucked it up.

With a child to support, Plummy had moved back to Huntsville and taken the best-paying job her philosophy major let her find. She started at Strangelove's, near the square, where the restrooms were for Misters and Missiles. Circling the pond in nearby Big Spring Park, cherry trees, given to the city by the Japanese to commemorate international reconciliation, showed a blush of modest self-consciousness in April.

To the east of the city, the Tennessee River Valley sputtered out in a handful of mountains blue as lakes. From the top of Monte Sano, you could see the city lights spread out below like a fireworks display without the booms and flares and hissing wicks. In Strangelove's, the lights had been dim, the room smoke-filled, the music sad or raunchy or both, and the men lonely.

The job at Moon Shots offered her a little more responsibility and a little more money. At Moon Shots, the lights were low, the room smoke-filled, the music sad or raunchy or both, and the men lonely, but the men were better dressed and often leaned briefcases against their bar stools. Sometimes they sat in booths, ate steaks, and checked e-mail on their laptops.

By now she was expert at her work. From sloppy to mean, she could handle a drunk with one arm tied behind her back. It was possible she knew how to mix every drink ever invented, even the ones with stupid names, though only the guys' dates wanted these—or the guys thought they did. She also had to oversee the wait staff, settle disputes, keep her temper in check when a customer sent a drink back. She worked an eight-hour shift, but often enough wound up staying longer. She got so tired she felt like grabbing a drink herself, but she had quit when she found out she was pregnant with Banger and she was not going to start up again.

Banger still had not told his mother, and keeping the news to himself made blood go to his brain and knock crazily against his ears. Still, he was trying not to jump to conclusions, something his mother always warned him against. He was think-

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ing things through, and now he had a question for Mr. Singer, his social-studies teacher. For several days he tried hanging back after school, but his best friend, Thurgood Marshall Taylor, wouldn't let him. "What are you waiting for?" Thurgood demanded. "We'll miss the bus." So Banger would follow him out to the parking lot where the yellow buses were lined up. Finally on a Tuesday he managed to escape from the cafeteria, saying he had to go to the bathroom, and found Mr. Singer eating a tuna-fish sandwich at his desk.

"This is my lunch break, Banger," he said. "Ask me in class."

The question popped out of Banger's mouth anyway. "If a boy is wearing a uniform like—like a Nazi uniform, does that mean he's a Nazi?"

Mr. Singer slowly put down his half-eaten sandwich. "You know a boy who wears a Nazi uniform?"

"It was in a movie," Banger said quickly.

"Well, didn't the movie explain it?"

"Not really."

"I guess not," Mr. Singer said, "or you wouldn't have come to me." He had a high, brainy-looking forehead and an open face, and he was tall and looked tall even seated.

"I know you know history and stuff."

Mr. Singer was silent. Banger waited.

"What movie?" Mr. Singer asked, taking another bite.

"I don't remember what it was called."

"You can't remember the name of the movie?"

Banger shrugged. "I just thought you might know the answer."

"This is important to you, Banger?" Mr. Singer stood up, brushing crumbs from his front.

Face chalky, forehead damp, Banger nodded that it was important. It seemed to him that Mr. Singer looked as if he really cared about what was on his mind. But he remembered hearing some kids saying that Mr. Singer was a Jew, and realized that probably the last thing he wanted to hear about was Banger's grandfather. "Forget it," Banger said, and ran out of the room.

Thurgood said Banger looked as white as a ghost, then exploded into laughter. "Man, you look just like you been given detention for the rest of the year!"

"Shut up," said Banger.

They got off at the same stop, Thurgood turning left, Banger right. In the distance he could see the Saturn rocket at the Marshall Space Center: Huntsville's main tourist attraction. It rose against the skyline on the other side of the cotton field that stretched past his house and a row of others like it. When he was in third grade and then again when he was in fifth, his class had taken field trips to clamber around the rocket.

He threw his backpack onto the couch and went into the kitchen; his mother was still at work. Pushing his hair out of his face, he stacked the dishes in the dishwasher and wrapped potatoes in tinfoil and pricked them with a fork, setting the oven at 350 degrees. He did what he could to help out his mother, mowing or raking depending on the season, doing his homework properly so that he stayed on the honor roll, leaving the porch light on for her when he went to bed.

"God," she said to him once. "My whole life would have been different if I had met a man like you."

A BOY OF twelve lives intensely, every bone in his body desirous of movement, every nerve lit, every brain cell on high alert. He wants to know as many things as he can. Every fact he encounters is absorbed directly into his skin. How to fix a motor, how to tie knots, how to kick a field goal, how to ask out a girl, whether there really is a God or if He's just a story parents tell children, like Santa Claus. He wants to know when his voice will deepen, when his body will get taller, when he'll be able to shave. He wants to know if his ancestry is one of Nazis and roaming gamblers. And he has to be cool about it all. If someone asks him how he's feeling, he has to say okay, like that, okay, even when his heart is going 90 miles an hour in a 30-mile-an-hour zone, even when he feels history is kicking him in the teeth.

He kept the secret to himself for a week. Every time somebody said something to him, he had trouble answering because all he could think was that he must not mention what was really on his mind. Holding the secret made him hunch forward, as if he were keeping it next to his chest; the principal's secretary asked if he was coming down with the flu. He couldn't look his mother in the eye, knowing what he knew that she did not.

Coming home one night, Plummy was surprised to see the upstairs lights on. She mounted the stairs and found her son rummaging in the storage closet. "What are you doing, Banger?"

"Nothing," he said.

"My foot," she said. "It's the middle of the night. You're supposed to be asleep. How do you think you're going to go to school tomorrow?"

"Mom," he said, turning to her, making himself look her in the face. "Look at these." He held out the photographs.

She went through them, peering at each one as if she were examining a hand of cards. "Your

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grandfather must have brought these over from Augsburg."

Banger took them back and pulled out the picture of the line of boys in their short-pants uniforms. "Isn't this Grandfather?" he asked, pointing at the kid on the left.

He had seen enough photographs of his grandfather as a young man to know that it was, but he wanted to soften the blow.

Plummy followed Banger's finger. The picture had been overexposed and her father's face was bleached by the sunlight to a small white cloud, but it was indeed a picture of him.

How hot it is in here, Plummy thought. Hot and dusty. There were cobwebs in the corners near the ceiling and a dead silverfish, dried to a flake, on the floor. The slightest movement churned up a small storm of dust motes around the light bulb. Plummy stopped breathing. She felt the color leach from her face, as if she were a 19th-century heroine and had consumption and was dying.

"Why is he wearing a uniform?" Banger asked. "Was Granddad a Nazi?"

"Was he a—?" The words were too peculiar to form. What language was this? "You know better than that, Banger. Your grandfather was a good man."

"Then why is he wearing that uniform?"

She sat down on the floor, next to the deceased silverfish.

"Nazis killed Jews," Banger said. "America fought the Nazis. That was what World War II was all about."

"There were other reasons to fight, too. Pearl Harbor, for example."

"He was a Nazi."

"Maybe you had to wear a uniform if you were just German. Maybe these kids are something like the Boy Scouts. It could be something like that."

"Boy Scouts! Mom, he kept this a secret from you."

"If your grandfather had done anything wrong, he would never have held on to this picture. These boys must have been his friends."

"His friends?" Banger asked, and the implication of it hung in the musty air, making the closet all the more crowded. "If it wasn't wrong, why didn't he show it to us? Why didn't he tell us about his friends? Granddad was a Nazi." He was talking loudly, and his voice cracked. Plummy reached for his hand but he pulled away from her and stood up. "A Nazi," he said again.

"He wasn't! I would know it if he was."

"My grandfather was a fucking Nazi."

Plummy jumped up from the floor and slapped him. They stared at each other in shock. "Oh," she said, horrified. "I didn't mean it!"

Banger ran down the stairs. Plummy rushed after him. "I'm so sorry, but you have to understand, honey, I'm sure there's an explanation." She didn't even know what she meant by that. It was just words. The words had come out of her mouth, but they had nothing to do with her mind, which was numb.

Banger slammed his bedroom door in her face and yelled at her not to come in. She apologized again, through the door, but he wouldn't relent. Finally she retreated to her own bedroom, with its pale yellow walls and deep blue window sills. She chewed her nails to the quick. She never really fell asleep, not really.

Banger dragged himself out of bed in the morning and got on the school bus with Thurgood, but he kept yawning and rubbing his eyes. On the bus, Thurgood asked if he could borrow his homework for English. Banger clicked open his three-ring notebook and handed over the page. During social studies, Thurgood tried to pass it back, but Banger's fingers seemed to be as sleep-deprived as his brain and he dropped it, watching helplessly as it parachuted to the floor. He leaned over to pick it up but Mr. Singer's right foot landed on it first. Mr. Singer was wearing Timberlands. A black suit and Timberlands. He had big feet, and his shoe pretty much took up the page.

He lifted his foot. "Perhaps you'd like to pick that up," he said.

Banger reached down.

Mr. Singer put his foot down again, just in time not to step on Banger's sleepy fingers. "On the other hand," he said, "maybe I'd better look at it." He glanced at Banger's book report. "Who was your intended recipient?"

"Nobody," Banger mumbled. It was just his crummy luck that Mr. Singer hadn't seen that *he* was the recipient.

"Nobody. 'Nobody' was a famous answer to a question in a famous book. Have you been reading *The Odyssey*?"

He shook his head. He didn't even know what *The Odyssey* was.

The bell rang and everyone started to get up.

"You will stay," Mr. Singer said.

Banger sat back down. He opened and shut the lid of his desk just to be doing something. He was careful not to look up when Thurgood left.

"I would not have expected this of you, Banger," said Mr. Singer.

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"I'm sorry. I never did it before."

"'Nobody,' or 'No man,' is what Odysseus answers when the Cyclops asks him his name. Do you know who the Cyclops was?"

Banger shook his head. Mr. Singer had asked the question softly, and Banger heard no taunt or disappointment in it. Mr. Singer was seeming more and more like an okay kind of guy.

"The Cyclops was a one-eyed giant."

Banger was feeling faint and a bit sick to his stomach from lack of sleep, but he was also interested—a one-eyed giant was kind of cool. He had thought he was going to be punished, made to stay after school and clean blackboards or something. But it didn't look as if that was what was on Mr. Singer's mind.

"My boy," he said, "I am going to bring you some books to read. You can keep them over the summer." There were only eight more weeks before school let out.

"Thanks, Mr. Singer."

"You're welcome." He sat down in one of the classroom seats—even though, Banger noted, it couldn't have been easy for such a big person to jam himself into a kid's chair. He looked at Banger, and Banger wondered what he saw. "By the way," he said, "why do we call you Banger?"

Banger squirmed.

"I once studied in England," Mr. Singer said. "In England, a banger is a wiener. Now, about boys in Nazi uniforms. The other day you left the room before I could tell you this. Toward the end of World War II, the Nazis drafted young boys into the army. Kids, still in short pants. The boys had no choice."

"Really? No kidding? Like the Boy Scouts? Are you sure?"

His mother had been right! Sometimes he forgot she was older and knew more than he did.

"I wouldn't call them Boy Scouts, but yes, I'm sure. So who was the kid in the uniform?"

Banger hesitated before answering. "My Granddad."

"Ah. Well, he had no choice in the matter."

Banger reached a fist up into the air over his head, pulled it down, and shouted "Yes!" the way athletes did on television.

Mr. Singer unfolded himself from the school desk and stretched. "We need to put your mind to good use, Banger. Maybe you'd like to know more about World War II?"

Banger wanted to know more about everything. "Sure," he said.

MR. SINGER dismissed him, and he raced out in time to catch the bus.

His mother was clipping back the wisteria when he got home. "I'm sorry I slapped you," she said, resting the clippers on the ground.

"Yeah. I'm sorry I said the f-word." He let his backpack slide to the porch. "Mom, did you know banger means wiener in England?"

"No," she said. "I didn't know that."

"Bangers and mash. That's franks and mashed potatoes."

"Really," she said.

"Yeah, Mr. Singer told me."

"That's nice," Plummy said.

"Don't you see? It's like everybody has been calling me a wiener all my life."

"Oh, no. It's not, sweetie, because we're not in England. In Alabama, a banger is someone who lets a door bang."

In Alabama, a banger was someone who did something with girls he couldn't talk to his mother about. A really hot thirteen-year-old-girl would walk past and one of Banger's buddies would punch him on the shoulder and say, loudly and gleefully, "Hey, Banger!" He was beginning to feel the pressure of it. But now he said, "If this gets out, it'll kill me. I don't want to be Banger any more."

"Okay. What do you want to be called? Bill? Billy?"

"Will."

"Will is a great name."

"Mom?"

"What, Will?

He was too excited about changing his name to tell her what Mr. Singer had said about the draft. "Aren't you late, Mom?"

Plummy had spent the afternoon in a daze of memories, trying to square them with the photograph. She was sure, as sure as she could be about anything, that her father had been kind and good. Not only to her and her mother, but to their friends and relatives, their neighbors, to dogs and cats and winter-starved birds. She had once watched him chase a fly out the front door rather than swat it. He had turned the chase into a dance, waltzing around the room and humming a melody by Strauss. As for politics, she remembered her father telling her how proud he was to live in Huntsville, a city that had integrated itself, peacefully, even before the marches in Birmingham and Selma. Maybe not because this was the morally right, legally right, spiritually right thing to do but because it was a city whose economy depended on

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federal funding to keep its space program going. Still, Huntsville had done it.

But she could see now that he had lied when he said that the one and only time he had marched for anything was during the civil-rights movement.

All morning she had tried to make the two things fit. She would look at the photo and then drift into thought until she found herself looking again at her father in his short pants and armband and finally she got out the clippers and put on gardening gloves and went to work on the wisteria. And when Banger—Will—arrived home, she had been thinking that while her father had been a good person, she was not. Her father had never laid a hand on her, but she had slapped her son.

She put her wallet in the back pocket of her jeans and clutched her car keys. "I want you to get to bed early tonight," she said to Will, on her way out.

"Oh, and Mom?" he called after her, as she was turning the key in the ignition. "You were right!"

RIGHT ABOUT what? When had she ever been right about anything? It had been right for her to have and keep Will, but that was about it. In the ladies' room at Moon Shots, she sat on the toilet in the handicapped stall, holding on to the safety rail; the seat was so high that she felt shaky, the floor as far away as another planet. But anyone coming in would be more likely to want the regular stall, and she was safe here for a while.

The stall smelled of antiseptic. Someone had gotten mad at the toilet-paper dispenser and taken off the whole side of it to get at the roll. Some of the paper had been left on the floor, and Plummy realized that she had stepped on it and that it was probably stuck to her shoe.

She remembered being her father's banjo. She remembered playing Crazy Eights and how he would wiggle his eyebrows like Groucho Marx while he studied his cards. For God's sake, he had walked with Martin Luther King, with Fred Shuttlesworth. A German who was a better American than many Americans, if you asked her.

What could any child know about politics, she thought. What could her father have known? Dueling clubs in Heidelberg, fraternities, football, the scouts, street gangs, Hitler Youth—to a boy, they must all have been the same, with rules, insiders and outsiders, initiations, insignia, and secret codes. Boys were savages. Part of a parent's job was to civilize them. Her father had become the most civilized of men, considerate of all and gentle with his girls, as he called Plummy and her mother. He had come home one day with a bright new wedding band to replace the original, worn thin with the years. When Plummy drove home from Florence to confess to her parents that she was going to be a single mother, he had taken her shopping for maternity clothes. Her father! Her mother had been crying and hysterical, wailing that Plummy's life was over, that now she would never do anything with her college degree, she would just be a slave to motherhood. Her father said, "You're going to need things." At first, she had thought he was speaking philosophically, but then he said, "We must help you to get ready." He was starting to be old by then, and he was losing his hair and was not quite as tall as he had been when she was little. "Come," he said to his wife, with that trace of an accent that remained, more in the sound than the syntax. "We must take our daughter to the mall."

Plummy got off the toilet, peeled the toilet paper from the bottom of her shoe and washed her hands again.

Out front, her boss said, "God, Plummy, what's wrong with you? First you're late and then you disappear into the Ladies so long I was beginning to think you died in there."

"I'm fine," she said, and started washing glasses.

The television over the bar was on, and everyone was staring at it. She looked up to see what they were watching. "It's Mir," her boss said. The space station was falling to earth, breaking up as it entered the atmosphere.

A guy at the bar motioned to her and said, "Jack straight up, Bud chaser." She set it up. He was wearing a tie and seemed uncomfortable on his stool. "I hate endings," he said, jerking his head toward the TV.

IN THE department store, her father had talked to her about beginnings. He had put an arm around her shoulders. "I am glad you chose to have this baby," he said. "I want to say thank you."

"Thank you? For what?"

"For believing in the future," he had said. "It is important for life to go on and on."

She wondered now if he had been trying to tell her something, a confession of his own. It occurred to her that this might have been how he thought of her when she was born: as life going on and on, a sequel to the life he had had in Germany.

It wasn't until the following year that she had realized her father was dying. He wasn't especially old, and it didn't happen all at once. Parts of him were failing, breaking down. He grew hard of hearing. His hands grew arthritic. His hips gave him trouble when he walked. He could no longer make

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out print with his glasses and had to use a special machine to read. He developed high blood pressure. The aeronautical engineer was falling to earth. Like Mir.

It took six years, and for those six years he doted on his grandson. For months after his grandfather died, Banger kicked chairs, punched pillows, slapped plates down on the table, taking his anger out on things that didn't know they weren't doing what he wanted them to do. When he had worn out his anger, he subsided into not caring. About anything. A year passed before he began to refer to the grandfather he had known, to remind Plummy of what his grandfather had said to him and done with him, to ask Plummy about his grandfather's life.

Plummy had begun to worry about the absence of an adult male figure in her son's life. She had a pretty face and was slender, with narrow wrists and ankles and a sense of style, but as a single parent those attributes were about as useful to her as a comb to a bald man. She figured no one who wasn't drunk was going to propose to her (who else did she meet, working in a bar?), and since she'd stopped drinking she didn't date drunks. So when he wanted to hear about his grandfather, she had been glad to tell him. She might have been a rotten failure when it came to providing a father for him, but she could tell him what a wonderful man his grandfather had been.

One of Plummy's courses in college had been a semester-long seminar in Evil. Like all the other students, she loved to say she'd gotten a good grade in Evil. They'd read the Book of Job, Freud, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Adorno, Benjamin, Sontag, and Wiesel. "And that was just in the first week," she would add, amused by the exaggeration. The "paradigm" for the course, as the professor put it, was the Holocaust. When she visited her parents and told them what she was learning in Evil, her father had said, "Good, good. It's always better to know the truth, even or especially when it is ugly. As even the English poet John Keats would have discovered if only he had lived a little longer."

Taking that class, she had concluded that there was no way of getting beyond good and evil. It was a trial just to tell the difference between them, and the more she thought about it, the less sure she became about everything she had learned. But evil, she came to think, was secondhand and unoriginal. It repeated itself, dragging its heavy body through murk, muck, and slime. It was redundant and strangulating. Goodness was singular, and always new. And it was expansive. It liberated.

That was her considered opinion.

When she got home that night, she revisited the storage closet. This time she was looking for a particular item. When she found it, she yanked on the string that switched off the overhead light bulb and carried it downstairs to give to her son. "I know nobody uses slide rules any more," she said, "but this one belonged to your grandfather. It was made in Germany."

He ran his fingers over the grained leather case. Finally he asked, "Do you know how to work it?"

"I'm not sure anybody knows how to work one any more."

"It's kind of neat anyway," Will said.

"Do you think I'm a good person, Will? In spite of—of the—of my behavior," she murmured, owning and disowning her past at the same time.

He could have taken the opportunity to ask about the boyfriends of yore. He could have, but he didn't. When the question was put the way she had put it, how could he say no? If she had slept with nine hundred ninety-nine men, she would still be his mother, kind and good. It was, after all, a simple question. "Yes," he said. "Naturally."

She had gotten that right.

WHEN WILL told her what it was she had been right about, Plummy at first felt relief. This was followed by anger that her father hadn't trusted her with the truth about his life. Now she tried to forgive him. Perhaps he'd been afraid. In the aftermath of World War II, people in America—people in Alabama—might not have tolerated his past. Maybe her father had worried about a *lynching*, for God's sake.

She began to wonder what she would have done if her father *had* been a Nazi. Could she have forgiven him, arguing that it was a horrid time, a horrid, torn place? Or would she have set her face against him, refusing the good because the bad was overwhelming? Or suppose it was her *son* who was a Nazi. How could she ever have loved him less, no matter what he did? But how, if he were a Nazi, could he be her son?

Aaron Singer telephoned to invite Plummy and her son to Passover seder at his house. "My wife and I thought Banger might find it interesting."

"Thank you for giving him that information about his grandfather, Mr. Singer."

"Aaron, please," he said. "The fact is, after 1938, German youth were required to serve in the Deutsches Jungvolk. As young as ten. A couple of years of that and they were drafted into the Hitler Youth. A few of them may have been Nazis, but what does it mean to be a Nazi when you're

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twelve? Not much, I think. Not much more than it means to be a robot. Does he have a friend he'd like to be there, too? At the seder?"

Plummy told him about Thurgood and that Banger wanted to be called Will now.

At the seder, Plummy and her son sat across from Thurgood and his parents while Aaron and Miriam Singer occupied the end seats. Plummy already knew the Taylors, of course. Everyone was on a first-name basis by the time they sat down at the table.

Will and Thurgood were making faces at the gefilte fish. "Will," she said.

Will was what Earl Fitts had not had, and what the Rambling Gambler had not had. But who could blame them? It was the flaw in Nietzsche's philosophy, or what people had made of his philosophy: if you weren't born with will, you had to will yourself to it, and you couldn't do that unless you already had will.

Aaron Singer explained the meaning of Passover, its relationship to the exodus from Egypt and to the transmission of Judaism, and called on Will and Thurgood, as the youngest there, to take turns reading the Four Questions. Why is this night different from all other nights? A copy of the Haggadah rested at every place. Why on this night do we eat unleavened bread? Aaron Singer explained that the three *matzot* symbolized the food of slavery and also of redemption, since the fleeing Israelites had no time to allow their bread to rise. On the seder platter there were bitter herbs, another remembrance of servitude, and *haroset*, a mixture of chopped nuts and apples to resemble the mortar the slaves had used making bricks for Pharaoh.

"I learned about Pharaoh's slaves in Sunday school," Thurgood said.

Outside the perimeter of the light from the floor lamp, darkness waited without moving.

The hour grew late, and Will and Thurgood were granted permission to leave the table.

Plummy had worn a skirt and a short fitted jacket. She slung the jacket over the back of her chair. Decaf was poured into a mix of unmatched demitasse cups for the adults. Over her cup, she sneaked glances at her son sprawled on the living-room floor. In another year he would probably be taller than she was. A few short years and he'd be gone to college.

Deep into the evening, as the men unbuckled their belts and the women slipped off their heels, and everyone present had begun to think of the Singers' dining room as their own, while Miriam removed dishes and Aaron refilled glasses and the boys had fallen asleep in front of the television set, the talk, because of the occasion, was of history—Jewish and African-American and German—and community—Jewish and African-American and German—and good (that was a short subject) and evil, and before they knew it would happen, though when they later remembered the night they all thought they should have known it would happen, the Holocaust reared its ugly head. Voices were hushed, but there it was, the huge, ungainly centerpiece no one could see over. The paradigm, as Plummy's professor had said.

Wanting to turn away from it, wanting not to have to look it in the face, they substituted one atrocity for another, and another for another, veering into Darfur and Iraq, which were on everyone's mind. Miriam switched the conversation to the subject of anti-Semitism in the South. Aaron pointed out that in the South, at least in the 19th century and through much of the 20th century, anti-Catholicism was a much bigger problem. The Taylors began to talk about racism in America, and Plummy—her bitten nails, splashed with silver-pink nail polish, wrapped around her water glass—blurted, loudly, "My father marched with Shuttlesworth!" The conversation halted.

How does one respond to a non-sequitur?

They recovered and rushed to ask when and where, and that rush spilled into the rush of leave-taking. When the heat of embarrassment had left her face—she and Will were back home by then, in their bedrooms—she asked herself if she had made that stupid, self-serving announcement because she was proud of her father, or because she was ashamed of his heritage, and she realized she would never know the answer.

A woman with a son takes on the mantle of his maleness at the same time that she becomes a servant to him. She knows what it is to be both the woman he loves and the boy he is.

Sometimes, when she is lying in bed after a hard shift, she hears him in his room. Surfing the web, maybe, or drawing cartoons, or pitching wads of paper over his shoulder into the basketball hoop/trashcan: these are the things she imagines him doing. She knows how graceful boys can be when they are being themselves. She wants him to become a happy man, without recesses of sadness, without anger or cynicism, true to himself and others. If this meant being left behind, she would watch over him like a lesser god from a half-forgotten religion, a local god, yes, of grove or natural spring, but present.

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Hugo Chávez's Jewish Problem

Travis Pantin

In December 1998, preaching a gospel of socialist revolution that had gone blessedly unvoiced in the decade following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Hugo Chávez won a landslide election for the presidency of Venezuela. At the time, his governing philosophy, dubbed "Chávismo," seemed unlikely to amount to more than a historical and geographical anomaly—a temporary reversal in a region that appeared to have decisively rejected Marxist nostrums.

Nearly another decade has passed since Chávez's ascension. He has suffered a few setbacks in the intervening years, notably a temporary ouster in a 2002 coup and a defeat in a referendum last year that, if passed, would have effectively made him dictator for life. His propensity for wild rhetoric and diktats—as when he created a new time zone by fiat in December 2007, moving the clocks in Venezuela back a half-hour to address the inability of his countrymen to arrive promptly at appointments—has led to questions about his emotional and mental stability. It has also made it easier for Western policymakers to discount the seriousness of his oft-stated goal of fomenting violent political change throughout Latin America.

But to dismiss Chávez as a lunatic is to wish away his proven political skill. He is, without question, a powerful figure—and one who, thanks to a quirk of geography, is also in possession of dangerously large amounts of oil. His government claims to control over 100 billion barrels of proven reserves, by far the largest of any country in the Western hemisphere. Although estimates vary, at current production levels and prices Venezuela's oil revenues may top $250 million daily.

Unlike Fidel Castro, who as a client of the Soviet Union had to apply to his patron for funds, Chávez is thus free to indulge his ambitions. "In Venezuela we have a strong oil card to play on the geopolitical table," he told the Argentinian newspaper *Clarín* in 2005. "It is a card," he added, "that we are going to play forcefully against the nastiest country in the world, the United States."

To this end, Chávez has made common cause with FARC, a narco-terrorist group working tirelessly to overthrow the legitimately elected democratic government of Colombia, Washington's closest ally in South America. No less ominously, he has aligned his government with regimes and terror groups that would otherwise seem to hold little attraction for a Spanish-speaking country on South America's northern coast. These include Libya—which awarded Chávez the al-Qaddafi International Prize for Human Rights, named for the country's dictator—as well as Syria, Hizballah, and Hizballah's patron Iran. Virtually alone among world leaders, Chávez is an impassioned defender of Tehran's right to pursue nuclear technology and has even hinted he would be willing to finance it.

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As this list may suggest, there is something else, aside from simple anti-Americanism, at work in Chávez's foreign policy. He and his supporters are in the grip of another age-old obsession, albeit one with a few indigenous twists: an obsession, that is, with the supposedly excessive power of world Jewry, and in particular of Venezuela's few, prosperous, and increasingly imperiled Jews.

VENEZUELA'S JEWISH community, amounting to less than 1 percent of the country's total population of 26 million, is among the oldest in South America, dating back to the early 19th century. During the struggle for independence from Spain, the fugitive revolutionary Simón Bolívar found refuge among a group of Venezuelan Jews, some of whom later went on to fight in the ranks of his liberating army. Today, the majority of the country's Jewish population is descended from an influx of European and North African immigrants who arrived during the years surrounding World War II. Most reside in the capital city of Caracas, comprising a tightly knit community made up of roughly equal numbers from Ashkenazi and Sephardi countries of origin.

Venezuelans pride themselves on living in an ethnic and religious melting pot. Their homeland, unlike its neighbors Argentina, Paraguay, and Chile, has no history of having harbored Nazi fugitives. Before Chávez came to power, members of the Jewish community reported little animosity from either the government or the populace, and sharply anti-Zionist rhetoric was relatively uncommon. Nor did Venezuela's fifteen synagogues (all but one of them Orthodox) experience much of the anti-Semitic vandalism common in other Latin American countries with tiny Jewish populations. The Hebraica center—its building functions as a lavish social hub, elementary school, country club, sports facility, and gathering place for Caracas Jewry—was largely left in peace.

No longer. Since Chávez took the oath of office at the beginning of 1999, there has been an unprecedented surge in anti-Semitism throughout Venezuela. Government-owned media outlets have published anti-Semitic tracts with increasing frequency. Pro-Chávez groups have publicly disseminated copies of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the early-20th-century czarist forgery outlining an alleged worldwide Jewish conspiracy to seize control of the world. Prominent Jewish figures have been publicly denounced for supposed disloyalty to the "Bolívarian" cause, and "Semitic banks" have been accused of plotting against the regime. Citing suspicions of such plots, Chávez's government has gone so far as to stage raids on Jewish elementary schools and other places of meeting. The anti-Zionism expressed by the government is steadily spilling over into street-level anti-Semitism, in which synagogues are vandalized with a frequency and viciousness never before seen in the country.

The details are arresting.

- Graffiti, often bearing the signature of the Venezuelan Communist party and its youth organization, have appeared on synagogues and Jewish buildings, with messages like "MATA NIÑOS" ("child killers"), "JUDIOS AFUERA" ("Jews get out"), "JUDIOS PERROS" ("Jews are dogs"), and swastikas linked to stars of David by an equals sign.
- Sammy Eppel, a columnist for the independent Caracas newspaper *El Universal*, has documented hundreds of instances of anti-Semitism in government media. To take one particularly noxious example, in September 2006 *El Diario de Caracas*, until recently one of the country's most important papers, published an editorial containing these fiery words:

> Let us pay attention to the behavior of the Israeli-Zionist associations, unions, and federations that are conspiring in Venezuela to take control of our finances, our industries, commerce, construction—which are infiltrating our government and politics. Possibly we will have to expel them from our country . . . as other nations have done.

- On television, Mario Silva, the host of a popular pro-Chávez show called *La Hojilla* ("The Razor Blade"), has repeatedly named prominent Venezuelan Jews as anti-government conspirators and called on other Jews to denounce them. "Rabbi Jacobo Benzaquén and Rabbi Pynchas Brener are actively participating in the conspiracy in conjunction with the media," Silva has said. "So as not to be called an anti-Semite," he added, "I repeat that those Jewish businessmen not involved in the conspiracy should say so."
- Armed government agents have conducted two unannounced raids on the Hebraica club during the past five years. The first occurred during the early morning hours of November 29, 2004, when two dozen men wearing masks invaded the elementary school just as pupils were arriving for class. In the second, which came shortly after midnight on December 2, 2007, government agents broke through the front gate and disrupted hundreds of celebrants at a wedding party in the nearby synagogue. In each case, allegedly, the agents

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were looking for weapons and other evidence of "subversive activity."

- The last few years have seen the creation of a terrorist group in Venezuela calling itself Hizballah in Latin America. The group has already claimed responsibility for placing two small bombs outside the American embassy in Caracas in October 2006—one of them, it is thought, intended for the embassy of Israel. Although neither of the two bombs detonated, the group's website hailed the man who planted them as a "brother mujahedin" and has urged other, simultaneous attacks throughout Venezuela in solidarity with Hizballah in Lebanon.

In this connection, although there is no direct evidence linking Chávez with Hizballah in Latin America, the group's website has featured words of praise for him, and the feeling may well be mutual. Not only has Chávez repeatedly expressed support for Hizballah in general, but (according to Venezuelan newspapers) he paid $1 million to print posters of himself with Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah to be displayed at a Hizballah rally in Beirut.

INSOFAR AS there is a rationale behind any of this, it would seem to form a part of Chávez's general view of the world. According to that view, the United States has coopted both Europe and Israel into a transnational enterprise whose purpose is to exploit and impoverish the world's less developed but resource-rich countries. Jews, especially but not exclusively in the form of the state of Israel, are an integral part of this enterprise. In a July 2006 interview with the Arab TV network al-Jazeera, Chávez elaborated upon the relation between the U.S. and Israel:

> The greatest menace to the future of humanity is the United States, and one of its instruments of aggression in [your] part of the world is the state of Israel. . . . The Secretary of State has said that that [the U.S.] will change the map of the Middle East. This plan was made in advance and in great detail in the Pentagon, except that Israel is the executor. . . . They want to transform the map of the Middle East in order to guarantee the dominance and control of the largest reserves of oil and energy in the world.

As an alleged oppressor of the Palestinian Arabs, Israel has its own place of special infamy in Chávez's world view. This latter theme has served him particularly well in his efforts to mobilize the sentiments of his rural constituents. Thus, during a 2005 speech marking Columbus's discovery of the Americas, Chávez likened the plight of Venezuela's Indians to that of Palestinians. Reminding his listeners of how their ancestors had been "murdered in their land" by "governments, economic sectors, and great land estates," he thundered: "You were expelled from your homeland, like the heroic Palestinian people."

All of these elements seem entirely derivative of Marxist-Leninist theorizing, with a strong admixture of post-colonialism à la Franz Fanon and Fidel Castro. But Chávez is not just another Latin American leftist on the Castro model. While the Cuban dictator may be his most important political influence, his greatest intellectual debt is to the Argentinian writer and thinker Norberto Ceresole: a man not of the Left but of the populist Right, a Holocaust denier, and a sworn enemy of Israel and the Jews.

Born in 1943, Ceresole was one of the leading spokesmen for the radical populist government of the Argentinian president Juan Perón. Later, in the guise of a political theorist, he argued that the only appropriate leaders for Latin American nations were *caudillos*: nationalist, militarist, and charismatic strongmen capable of ushering in a "post-democratic" age in which the region's people would become effortlessly at one with the generals who would direct every aspect of society. Led by a group of such *caudillos*, a confederation of Latin American fascist states would then be in a position to beat back American global hegemony.

Ceresole reportedly traveled with Chávez during his initial bid for power. After the latter's 1998 victory, he published a celebratory volume, *Caudillo, Army, People: The Venezuela of President Chávez*. The second chapter is entitled "The Jewish Question and the State of Israel." In it, Ceresole espoused a "new revisionism" that defined the Holocaust as a "myth" and Israel as a global menace:

> The existence of this political enterprise—Israel: a power concentrated in the monopoly of monotheism and implemented through an army, police forces, jails, tortures, assassinations, etc.—seeks to consolidate itself through a series of ideological manipulations in the bosom of the hegemonic power of the United States, which seeks to be accepted as the ruler of the world by any means, even generalized terror, and dissuasive and persuasive practices.

It was for this reason, according to Ceresole,

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that one of the greatest threats to the Chávez regime lay in Venezuela's "Jewish financial mafia." Indeed, the Venezuelan Jewish community as a whole was to be considered guilty of race-based hostility to Chávez's redemptive nationalist movement.

The ingeniousness of Ceserole's doctrine, as filtered through the sensibility of Hugo Chávez, resides in its blending of Marxist economics with two venerable anti-Semitic traditions. The first, still powerful in South America, derives from Catholic teachings about the historic Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus. The second, encapsulated most notoriously in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, has flourished in both rightist and leftist variations throughout modern European history, resurfacing in our own time in the fulminations of extreme anti-Zionists. Chávez drew on both traditions in an address he delivered on Christmas Eve in 2004. Here he spoke ominously of certain "minorities, the descendants of those who crucified Christ," who had "taken possession of the riches of the world."

But there was an added element at play in this passage, which has to be quoted in full to be properly appreciated:

> The world has enough for everybody, but it happened that some minorities—the descendants of those who crucified Christ, the descendants of those who ejected Bolívar from here and who crucified him in their own way in Santa Marta, over in Colombia—took possession of the riches of the world. A minority appropriated the world's gold, the silver, the minerals, the waters, the good lands, the oil, and has concentrated the riches in a few hands.

Like most of its South American neighbors, Venezuela is a nation of economic extremes. There are a small number of extraordinarily well-to-do families—the "white oligarchs"—and an enormously large population of very poor people, partly or wholly native-American, with few prospects of economic advancement. Since his ascension to power, Chávez has been engaged in a policy of forcible redistribution, nationalizing industries and large farms and turning their proceeds over to social programs aimed ostensibly at ameliorating the condition of the poor.

In common with most such efforts at top-down nationalization and redistribution, however, this one has been a grotesque failure. A country bringing in at least $1.75 billion a week in oil revenues suffers from chronic food shortages, including in such staples as coffee and sugar. Even the oil business, now run by Chávez cronies rather than by professionals, is nowhere near as profitable as it might be. And so the inequities persist, and with them the need to identify scapegoats that can divert attention from Chávez's culpability and allow him to maintain his iron grip.

Chávez often speaks of Jesus Christ as the first true socialist, whose agenda he, like Bolívar before him, is fulfilling. In so doing he draws upon another Latin American trope, this one of more recent vintage. The "liberation theology" that emerged in Catholic circles in Brazil in the 1960's provided a theological justification for radical social change; proponents of this quasi-Leninist doctrine use the phrase "Christ killers" to refer to the capitalists who allegedly block the fulfillment of their revolutionary vision. In this sense, Chávez's Christmas 2004 speech, adroitly weaving together the teachings of liberation theology with local political history, appealing to a legacy of deep economic resentment that he himself has greatly exacerbated, and evoking the incendiary motifs of the world's oldest hatred, made up a perfect storm of demagogic rhetoric.

It is helpful to keep this background in mind in evaluating the response of Venezuela's Jews to the outrages, physical and verbal, that have been perpetrated against their community. Reaction to the Christmas 2004 speech provides an illustration.

As it happens, one unequivocally strong protest emanated from the Simon Wiesenthal Center in distant Argentina. "In your words," read a statement addressed to the Venezuelan president,

> we find two central arguments of anti-Semitism: the canard of the deicide and the association of Jews with wealth. . . . Our center condemns your anti-Semitic statements. Such offense to universal values demands an immediate and public apology.

But this protest itself drew a protest—from, in fact, the head of the Confederation of Jewish Associations of Venezuela. "We believe the president [in his speech] was not talking about Jews," wrote Fred Pressner in a letter to the Wiesenthal Center. Rather, Pressner went on, seizing on the speech's artful ambiguities, Chávez was referring to the "white oligarchy." Still worse, according to Pressner, was the fact that the Wiesenthal Center, by acting "without consulting us, on issues that you do not know or understand," had "interfered in the

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political status, in the security, and in the well-being of our community."

Unquestionably, the Venezuelan Jewish community is in a very difficult situation. There had already been something of a split earlier in 2004 following the first raid on the Hebraica club. While some had reflexively tried to downplay the significance of the incursion, Pynchas Brener, the country's chief Ashkenazi rabbi, demurred, pronouncing the raid a "direct aggression" by the state heralding an "important shift" in relations. "There is not a single Jewish family in Caracas that was not affected," Rabbi Brener said.

Nor was there any equivocation on Rabbi Brener's part in the wake of the second raid on the Hebraica club in December 2007. This was particularly ominous, he averred, because of the timing: the raid took place on the day before the Venezuelan electorate was scheduled to vote on a constitutional referendum that, if passed, would allow Chávez to retain office indefinitely. In light of the ruling party's well-documented eagerness to blame its political troubles on Jewish machinations, the raid could have been a fishing expedition—a hunt for prospective "evidence" pointing, in the event of the referendum's failure, to a conspiracy on the part of the country's leading Jews.

Shortly after this second raid, indeed, Pressner's organization abandoned its own previous calls for moderation. "We denounce this new and unjustifiable act against the Venezuelan Jewish community," it declared in a forceful press release, "and express our profound indignation and repulsion." For his part, Rabbi Brener proclaimed that the purpose of the raid "was just to scare the daylights out of the Jewish community, to convince us not to vote and to keep a low profile." But, he added defiantly, "since the Holocaust we don't scare easily."

Neither, of course, does Venezuela's president. Although the government acknowledged that the search for evidence of "subversive activity" at Hebraica was fruitless, and although the referendum did narrowly fail, Chávez has vowed to achieve his constitutional reform—that is, to create his dictatorship—by other means.

ONE-THIRD OF Venezuela's Jews have fled the country by now, and those who remain are in a state ranging from discomfiture to terror. When asked why they stay, some wealthier Jews say that the answer is economic. "The problem . . . is that you could never live like this anywhere else," the owner of a Caracas textile plant told a reporter from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "Nobody here really wants to go to Israel. You would need to have ten times as much money to live this way." Others, less well off, are similarly reluctant, and offers by the Israeli government to ease the process of *aliyah* have so far met with few takers.

The stated reasons are many. Even amidst all their trouble, it has been pointed out, Venezuela's Jews retain a workable relationship with the Chávez government. Jewish journalists can still speak out. Nor have Jewish business been targeted for expropriation by Chávez's redistributionist policies. Jews can still travel freely, and anti-Semitic violence has not touched many of them personally. So they hold out, bearing the yoke of economic and political harassment and hoping for change.

Are they right to do so? History suggests that once anti-Semitism becomes an instrument of state policy, the possibility of violence can never be discounted. For centuries, moreover, anti-Semitism has waxed and waned with fluctuating business cycles. With both the ailing economy and Chávez's social programs dependent almost entirely on oil revenues, a drop in prices could trigger widespread animosity against the "Semitic banks" that members of Chávez's party have repeatedly denounced for every passing ill. A major event like a military strike on Iran by the United States or Israel might similarly serve as justification for seizing the assets of Venezuela's Jewry. In the meantime, as the numbers dwindle, and many of the richest depart, it is becoming increasingly difficult to care for the Jewish poor, who make up a full 25 percent of the community.

Caught in a vise between an all too realistic fear and a possibly illusory hope, one of South America's most productive and peaceful minorities awaits the future in grim expectancy.

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The Iranian Shell Game

Emanuele Ottolenghi

EVER SINCE a defector exposed the existence of Iran's nuclear program in 2002, the regime in Tehran has routinely protested its innocence in the face of charges that it is developing fissile weapons of mass destruction and the missiles on which to carry them. Its nuclear program, Tehran claims, has only civilian purposes, and it is allowed to pursue such a program under the terms of the binding international treaties to which it is a signatory.

If Iran is telling the truth and desires solely nuclear *energy*—which would be peculiar, to say the least, considering that under its sands rest the world's second largest natural-gas reserves and the world's fifth largest crude-oil reserves—its behavior these past six years makes no sense. The regime would seem to have had everything to gain from making it crystal-clear to the world that it has no intentions of developing nuclear weapons. Instead, it has rejected repeated and alluring incentives designed to seduce it into demonstrating the non-existence of the efforts it continues to insist it is not undertaking. In the process, it has had to suffer painful economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations and the United States. Its six years of defiance and stonewalling have led to increasing diplomatic isolation.

As a matter of simple logic, then, it is only rational to conclude that Iran is working, and working very hard, to become a nuclear power. But there may be logic of a different and no less compelling kind behind its actions. For, at the end of these same six years, many in the West remain fiercely committed to the idea that discussing the dangers of Iran's pursuit of nuclear power—let alone discussing how to stop it—represents a greater threat to the world than does the Iranian pursuit itself.

For a significant portion of the world's foreign-policy makers and intellectuals, any confrontation with Iran on the matter of its nuclear program is dangerously provocative and therefore to be avoided. In particular, prominent European leaders have roundly denounced the supposed "adventurism" of the Bush administration and insisted that (in the words of one leading German Social Democrat) "military options must be taken off the table." Authoritative American voices joined this chorus in the wake of a 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate that declared (in an assertion supported by no other intelligence agency in the world) that Iran had suspended its nuclear-weapons program in 2003. More recently, elements within Western foreign-policy establishments have gone a step further and have begun to suggest that the world can "live with" an Iranian bomb.

And here we see why Iran's behavior over the past six years has been neither irrational nor foolhardy but rather shrewd, calculated—and successful. Even while loudly repudiating allegations that it is pursuing a military program, the regime has

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used every technique at its disposal to sow confusion and encourage divisions among its adversaries. These techniques have been of vital importance in gaining time for Iran as it has worked tirelessly toward a fait accompli by procuring the technology necessary for the development of nuclear weapons—including most saliently through the purchase of equipment and materiel that it cannot, by treaty and international law, possess.

IRAN'S EFFORTS to gain equipment vital to a secret nuclear program are mostly centered in Europe. In this, the involvement of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the elite branch of the nation's military, has been pivotal. The IRGC occupies a key place in the Iranian regime. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president, is a former senior officer of the corps, as are the head of the nation's security services and the chief of its information ministry. Iran's homegrown missile, the Shahab, is a product designed and built by the IRGC.

The IRGC is also reliably believed to be in charge of the nation's nuclear program. The two UN resolutions sanctioning Iran for its nuclear activities were targeted at senior IRGC officials. And the United States government, noting the IRGC's relationships with Hizballah, Hamas, and the Iraqi insurgents, has declared the IRGC to be a terrorist organization.

Consider now a few cases, beginning with a single public-works project inside Iran.

• Two European concerns—Wirth, from Germany, and Seli, from Italy—sold tunnel-boring equipment to Iran for its Ghomroud water project. Wirth's contract was concluded after Germany's export-control agency, BAFA, determined that the machines involved in this project, being intended only for civilian use, were not subject to embargo.

Overseeing the tunnel project, however, was Sahel Consulting Engineers, a company owned by the IRGC. Nor is this connection a secret. The website of Wirth's subsidiary in Iran features images of the Ghomroud construction site. The sign welcoming visitors to the project bears the logo of the IRGC, and the same logo is visible above the tunnel entrance.

Seli, for its part, sold its tunnel-making goods to an Iranian company called Ghaem. This sale, too, was found to be exempt from any restrictions or embargoes. But the U.S. Treasury has designated Ghaem as yet another subsidiary of the IRGC. Seli, in the meantime, is also involved in other important projects in Iran, among them the much larger Kerman water-tunnel project. That deal, worth 134.6 million euros over five years, was signed in 2004—with the active involvement of Sahel Consulting Engineers.

Unquestionably, the equipment has been used to dig water tunnels at Ghomroud and Kerman. Once the digging is finished, though, the equipment belongs to the subsidiary businesses of the IRGC, which can do with them what they wish.

Intelligence photographs have regularly indicated that much of Iran's clandestine nuclear program is being built deep underground, in bunkers accessible by means of tunnels. The machinery and technology for constructing such tunnels can only have been provided by Wirth and Seli. The purchase of this equipment by Iran is perfectly legal. The uses to which it may sooner or later be put are something else.

• Many European companies are also selling highly sophisticated technology to Iran, and are doing so through businesses that are already known to have diverted such technology to industrial activities related to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. The deals concluded by these Iranian businesses, or "end-users," can appear as legitimate as building water tunnels.

For example, Iran's Samamicro distributes high-precision tools made by a number of European companies, including Austria's Grabner Instruments, a leader in laboratory-testing equipment for the petrochemical industry, and Mahr GmbH, a German company producing high-precision measuring instruments. The value of such tools for illicit nuclear purposes is beyond dispute.

Italy's Iveco and Germany's Mercedes have also built an assembly line in Iran. No doubt the assembly line is used to produce trucks, as it is intended to do. But it is equally appropriate for producing launch ramps for missiles. Then there is Austria's KTM, which makes off-road leisure motorbikes. As can be clearly seen in official photographs, such bikes are being used by the IRGC to create mobile units trained to fire rocket-propelled grenades.

• And then there is military equipment per se. Most European military exports to Iran are flatly outlawed—but not all. The problem, once again, is the possible diversion of authorized equipment to illegitimate ends.

A patrol boat called the Levriero, made by the Italian company FB Design and used by Italy's customs police to fight smuggling at sea, was purchased by Iranian emissaries in the 1990's together with the boat's manufacturing frame and design plans. Thanks to those plans, Iran is now able to

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produce the vessel locally. Iranian-made copies of the Levriero took part in a peculiar incident this past January in the Straits of Hormuz, when IRGC speedboats seemed bent on provoking a confrontation with U.S. warships. They may also have participated in the March 2007 high-speed chase in the Shatt-el-Arab waterway that led to the kidnapping of fifteen British sailors.

Even when military goods are supplied to Iran under tight controls and for specific purposes, nothing is quite what it seems. In 2003, the United Kingdom and Italy supplied night-vision equipment to Iran's police for their anti-drug units. Quantities of this high-tech gear reportedly turned up inside the headquarters of Hizballah in southern Lebanon during the latter's 2006 confrontation with the Israeli army.

In 2005, Iran purchased 800 high-precision sniper rifles from the Austrian firm Steyr-Mannlicher, once again for ostensible use by police anti-narcotics units. When the United States imposed sanctions on Steyr-Mannlicher over this sale, Austria's defense ministry protested that it had been "unimpeachable." Fourteen months later, U.S. troops in Iraq seized more than 100 of the Steyr-Mannlicher rifles during a raid on an insurgent position. Steyr-Mannlicher denied that the guns had come from its consignment to Iran—which may have been true, since an exact replica of the rifle, apparently made in Iran, went up for sale at an arms fair in Tehran in 2006.

In brief, European and other Western companies, acting often with the blessing of their governments, have supplied Iran with a variety of sophisticated tools, putatively for benign or even worthwhile aims. Soon after the merchandise reaches its destination, it is systematically diverted to noncivilian use. By this means, proceeding with or without the knowing collusion of its Western suppliers, Iran has been spectacularly successful in evading the international sanctions regime.

But there is another, simultaneous aspect to Iran's success. This has been its campaign, waged on the diplomatic front, to prevent the international community from determining just what *are* its intentions, its strategies, and above all the state of its capabilities in the area of nuclear weapons.

The job of making that determination has fallen to Mohammad ElBaradei, the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a branch of the United Nations. Since 2003, at regular intervals, ElBaradei has been reporting back to the UN on what the IAEA has been able to learn from the Iranians and other sources. His reports have conveyed much sobering information, a tone (whether feigned or not) of urgency, and no indication of progress whatsoever. To the contrary, what they disclose are the successful workings of an Iranian policy aimed at occluding the IAEA's perspective through steady denial, the provision of incomplete or misleading information, and plain stalling.

On June 18, 2003, faced with mounting signs of a possible military nuclear program, ElBaradei announced: "We need to solve this issue as soon as we can."

Two months later, in late August, he worried:

> The information [we have procured] was in contrast to that previously provided by Iran. In addition . . . there remain a number of important outstanding issues, particularly with regard to Iran's enrichment program, that require urgent resolution.

A few days after that, he permitted himself a faint note of impatience:

> Iran should not wait for us to ask questions and then respond; it should come forward with a complete and immediate declaration of all its nuclear activities. That would be the best way to resolve the issues within the next few weeks.

The "best way," indeed—but that is clearly not how the Iranians saw it. By November 2003, without any evidence of Iranian cooperation, ElBaradei reported:

> Iran's nuclear program, as the agency currently understands it, consists of a practically complete front end of a nuclear-fuel cycle, including uranium mining and milling, conversion, enrichment, fuel fabrication, heavy- water production, a light-water reactor, a heavy-water research reactor and associated research-and-development facilities.

These words should have been enough in themselves to confirm what Iran was up to. But they were uttered just as the American failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq had become a dominating fact on the international horizon. As it happens, ElBaradei himself had been a not-insignificant player in efforts at the United Nations to stymie the U.S. effort to topple Saddam Hussein, and he was not about to present a dossier that might now incriminate Iran beyond the shadow of a doubt. Despite the facts adduced in his report, he continued to caution that there was still no *conclusive* evidence of a military program.

Almost exactly two years later, with still more

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facts surfacing, ElBaradei was, as ever, polite:

> In order to clarify some of the outstanding issues related to Iran's enrichment program, Iran's transparency is indispensable and overdue.

And once again the Iranians evidently felt otherwise. On January 27, 2006, ElBaradei wrote of repeated requests for a meeting with Tehran

> to discuss information that had been made available to the [UN] about alleged studies, known as the Green Salt Project, concerning the conversion of uranium dioxide into UF4 [the immediate precursor of fissile uranium] . . . as well as tests related to high explosives and the design of a missile re-entry vehicle, all of which could involve nuclear material.

A month later, on February 27, 2006, he again reported failure:

> Iran has yet to address the other topics of high-explosives testing and the design of a missile re-entry vehicle.

And a few months after that, on June 8, 2006:

> [But] since the last report, . . . Iran has not expressed readiness to discuss these topics further.

The Iranians went on ignoring him. On August 31, 2006, he wrote:

> Iran has not expressed any readiness to discuss these topics since the issuance of the . . . report in February 2006.

More than a year later, after Iran had endured two rounds of UN sanctions for its failure to comply with the IAEA, nothing had improved:

> Iran has not agreed to any of the required transparency measures, which are essential for the clarification of certain aspects of the scope and nature of its nuclear program.

On February 22 of this year, ElBaradei conveyed Iran's response to mounting signs of a clandestine military program:

> Iran stated that the allegations were baseless and that the information which the agency had shown to Iran was fabricated.

Forever tactful, the IAEA gave Iran another chance to come clean—to which Tehran summarily replied that "this was its final assessment on this point." The agency then showed Iranian officials a warhead design that it had obtained from the hard drive of an Iranian computer and deemed "quite likely to accommodate a nuclear device." Iran once more replied that "the schematic layout shown by the agency was baseless and fabricated."

This past May, ElBaradei caught the attention of Western news media with his latest report. In it, he duly noted that Iran had failed to explain the existence of a diagram for an underground testing facility; failed to explain the testing of explosive detonators normally used for nuclear weapons; and failed to explain the existence of documents (including a short video clip) relating to the modification of Iran's Shahab-3 missile to enable it to accommodate a nuclear warhead. Perhaps most disturbing in the report was this offhand passage about work being done by a scientist at the Institute for Applied Physics (IAP), an Iranian *military* research facility:

> The [IAEA] has also inquired about the reasons for inclusion in the *curriculum vitae* of an IAP employee of . . . [an] equation for the evolving radius of a nuclear-explosion ball with photos of the 1945 Trinity test.

That would be the explosion of a plutonium bomb in the New Mexico desert on July 16, 1945. Why would an IAP scientist have been working on this equation? One reason might be that his employers saw a possible application for it in Iran's current circumstances.

ELBARADEI HAS been at his task for more than five years. Even now, he will not come out and declare that Iran has a program to develop and deploy nuclear weapons. In fact, what five years' worth of mounting information in ElBaradei's own reports indicates is that this program can only have advanced. Notwithstanding the levying of sanctions by the United Nations and the United States, notwithstanding the ever-diffident nagging of the IAEA, the Iranian strategy of obfuscation, duplicity, and delay has worked.

"All warfare," Sun Tzu wrote,

> is based on deception. When able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away.

It is also true that, in diplomacy no less than in war, deception works because those being deceived prefer to live within the deception rather than to acknowledge the sobering facts staring them in the face, and thereby to accept the frightening responsibility of having to act to address and reverse them.

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OBSERVATIONS

Keeping Them Out, Letting Them In

Peter Wehner

MOST OF today's political debates in America fall into a familiar pattern. On issues ranging from taxes, health care, energy, education, and abortion to the Iraq war and government surveillance of suspected terrorists, liberals and conservatives assume distinct and often diametrically opposed positions. But in the last few years, one issue—immigration—has roiled American politics in unconventional ways. Crossing social and economic lines, differences over this issue have pitted the views and perceived interests of one minority (Hispanics) against another (African-Americans), caused divisions among people of shared religious faith, and set liberals concerned about the welfare of American workers against liberals who believe the United States has a duty to welcome newcomers from less developed nations.

But the issue is most neuralgic, it would seem, on the Right—to the point where divisions over it threaten to split apart the conservative coalition. In this internal conservative debate, a leading magazine like *National Review* is on one side, a leading newspaper like the *Wall Street Journal* on the other; much of the talk-radio world is on one side, President Bush and Senator McCain are on the other. The differences are deep, intense, and at times personal.

Now along come books by two leading advocates of the opposing camps. Speaking for the restrictionist camp is Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies and a contributor to *National Review* and *National Review Online*, who has written *The New Case Against Immigration: Both Legal and Illegal*.* Speaking for the latitudinarian camp is Jason L. Riley, a member of the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial board and the author of *Let Them In: The Case for Open Borders*.†

ON BEHALF of their respective causes, both Krikorian and Riley marshal an impressive number of facts and studies. Both write clearly and comprehensively, and both display polemical talent. But that is where the similarities end.

Unlike many critics of immigration, Mark Krikorian does not argue that today's newcomers are fundamentally different from yesterday's—i.e., less prepared for American life or less interested in acculturating to its norms. Immigrants, he says, "are what they've always been." Instead, it is *America* that is different—to the point where "a policy that served us well in our adolescence is harmful in our maturity."

Surveying the "impacts" of immigration, Krikorian strives to document how immigrants are indeed a threat to our economy and our sovereignty; how they cost too much, overpopulate the country, and fail to assimilate; how they are responsible for lengthening our commutes, causing urban sprawl, and thereby radically transforming our once-tranquil landscapes and even creating a "tree deficit." Yet none of this, he insists, is a knock on immigrants per se; the problem, instead, is "modern society" in general and, more specifically, "modern

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* Sentinel, 304 pp., $25.95.

† Gotham, 256 pp., $22.50.

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America," which simply can no longer accommodate mass immigration as it once could and did.

On these grounds, Krikorian flatly opposes further influx, legal no less than illegal. He wants to keep out both immigrants and guest workers, those who are skilled and those who are unskilled, those who come from Europe and those who come from Latin America, from Asia, or from Africa. "Modern America has outgrown mass immigration," he states categorically, and we therefore need to adjust our policies accordingly.

Nonsense, says Jason Riley, who contends in *Let Them In* that a liberal immigration policy not only is consistent with an American tradition that "has served us quite well over the past two centuries" but will make today's America better in almost every respect. An open-border policy, Riley writes, will increase overall productivity, keep us younger and stronger than our overseas competitors, and provide vital human capital. It is also wholly compatible with the needs of homeland security. For Riley, then, we seal the border at our peril. What we really need to do is to provide more, not fewer, legal ways for immigrants to enter America.

Designed explicitly to be a myth-buster, Riley's book is organized around many of the anti-immigrant claims made by critics like Krikorian. "Time and again," Riley concludes, "my own reporting and research found these claims"—namely, that immigrants pose a demographic threat, steal jobs from native-born Americans, overburden our welfare system, threaten our security, and are refusing to assimilate—"to be overblown when they weren't counterfactual." He concludes: "We still have much more to gain than lose from people who come here to seek a better life."

WHO GETS the better of the argument? In some respects, Krikorian does. Riley is capable at times of ascribing bad or even racist motives to those with whom he disagrees. Mocking immigration critics, he devotes part of his first chapter to going after, among others, Krikorian himself, whom he accuses of being a "puppet" of one John Tanton, "a radical environmentalist and staunch supporter of Planned Parenthood." He also warns readers not to assume that Krikorian's arguments are made in good faith.

Krikorian's book, with its measured tone and carefully qualified assertions, testifies to the unfairness of this particular charge. But *The New Case Against Immigration* is hardly free of other defects, while Riley's book has many virtues of its own. In particular, *Let Them In* excels in its analysis of the economic benefits of immigration, and in showing that individual states with large legal and illegal immigrant populations are faring better than one might suspect.

But that is just the problem: each author insists that his case is based on solid empirical evidence, leaving the lay reader struggling to decide whose evidence to believe and how to adjudicate their competing interpretations. Krikorian, for example, asserts on the basis of fact and argument that mass immigration makes it less likely that low-skilled American workers will be hired and more likely they will drop out of the labor market altogether. Wrong, answers Riley, citing a study by the economist Giovanni Peri according to which the inflow of immigrants to California over a 25-year period cannot be shown to have worsened the employment opportunities of natives with similar education and work experience.

Assimilation? "Ending mass immigration [will] not guarantee the restoration of a common civic culture," Krikorian concedes, "but continuing it does guarantee that any attempt at such restoration will fail." For Riley, by contrast, it is not immigrants who are assaulting our common American culture but our own homegrown elites. His solution to the problem? "Keep the immigrants. Deport the Columbia faculty."

What about demographics? "The artificial population growth caused by [mass immigration] is undermining a variety of modern goals related to quality of life," according to Krikorian. Afraid not, Riley counters. Not only is the United States "nowhere close to being overpopulated," but "[t]o the extent that immigrants facilitate U.S. population growth and wealth creation, they are part of the solution, not the problem."

Would America at least benefit from immigrants who are skilled professionals? No way, says Krikorian. Because of their "transnational lifestyles," skilled professionals pose an even greater challenge to "patriotic assimilation" than uneducated immigrants. They also displace American workers with comparable skills and training and remove an incentive for us to reform our low educational standards. Riley will have none of it. "[H]igh-skill immigrants from Europe, Asia, and Southeast Asia do more than create extra jobs for U.S. employers," he writes. "They also seem to have a knack for creating entirely new companies that employ thousands of people."

Even scholars are treated like ping-pong balls. Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation, cited favorably by Krikorian, calculated that in 2004, low-skill immigrant households represented a net annual burden to American taxpayers of nearly $20,000 per household. According to Riley, however, Rector's study is a "shoddy" and poorly argued piece of work. Again, Krikorian adduces a study by the Harvard economist George Borjas, who found that the immigration wave of the 1980's and 1990's caused a drop in the annual earnings of all categories of American workers, especially male high-school dropouts. According to Riley, Borjas "had to rig his model"—and Riley seeks to show how.

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ON AND on it goes. So unwilling is each author to concede even a single point to the other side that they come to sound more like lawyers than like analysts. In real life, there are simply not that many issues in which all the arguments line up on one side. That is certainly the case when it comes to immigration policy.

Thus, one should be able to concede that illegal immigration is a problem, both in terms of violating our laws and in terms of costs imposed on some communities. At the same time, one should be able to acknowledge that low-skilled workers fill actual needs, that high-skilled immigrants have added an enormous amount to our economy, and that the grit, drive, and adaptability of many of our newest immigrants are admirable qualities.

Though one would not know it from the positions staked out by Krikorian and Riley, many people do in fact hold such nuanced views. There is no real constituency in this country for open borders pure and simple; neither is there one for putting a stop to legal immigration altogether. A debate does rage over what to do with the millions of people who are already in the country illegally, but a broad consensus seems to have formed on the need both to prevent further illegal immigration and to rationalize the current system of legal immigration, which is an unholy mess.*

What of the politics of the issue? This, too, is a complicated story. Immigration has been a galvanizing issue in border states like California, which in 1994 passed a referendum, Proposition 187, denying access to education and health care to illegal immigrants and their children and requiring public employees to report such immigrants to the authorities. Yet as a *national* issue, immigration hardly registered until recently; according to Riley, it did not come up even once in the 2004 presidential debates.

That all changed in President Bush's second term. As a former governor of Texas, Bush was philosophically and emotionally disposed to welcome immigrants. "Family values do not stop at the Rio Grande River," he said many times. "Immigration is not a problem to be solved, it is the sign of a successful nation. New Americans are not to be feared as strangers, they are to be welcomed as neighbors."

In early 2006, Bush acted on his 2000 campaign commitment to reform the immigration mess by pushing for legislation that would increase enforcement measures but also create a guest-worker program. At the same time, a Senate bill supported by both Bush and John McCain would have allowed illegal immigrants to earn legal status if they met certain requirements. Both the President's initiative and the Senate proposal, the latter quickly labeled an "amnesty" program, caused large parts of the conservative talk-radio world to mobilize in opposition and much of the Republican base to move toward open revolt. The response helped kill the legislation.

But politics is a tricky business. As Riley reminds us, congressional Republicans hoped that by taking a strong stand against the illegal-immigration "crisis" in the spring of 2006, they would help their party's electoral prospects come fall. One can understand the thinking behind this. Immigration had indeed become an important issue for Republican voters, at times more important even than the Iraq war and national security; it stood to reason that tough or even harsh rhetoric would benefit a candidate in the primaries.

But what worked in the primary season did not resonate nearly so well in the general election. In fact, as Riley writes, "the strategy bombed," and it bombed "even in places where illegal immigration [was] a huge problem." In Arizona, which Riley calls "ground zero in the border wars," the Republican contenders J.D. Hayworth and Randy Graf went down to defeat; so, in Colorado, did Bob Beauprez, who had made opposition to illegal immigration a centerpiece of his run for governor. Other GOP candidates suffered a similar fate.

It is true that 2006 was a terrible political year for Republicans in general, and these candidates might have lost anyway. But it is just as likely that their approach backfired, and especially among Latino voters. The Republican share of the Hispanic vote, which had more than doubled in a decade (from, according to Riley, 21 percent in 1996 to 44 percent in 2004) plunged to just 29 percent in 2006.

HOW CAN we reconcile the fact that Bush and McCain's pro-immigration efforts caused such a fierce populist backlash with the fact that those championing an anti-immigration platform went down to defeat in 2006? And how is it that John McCain, running against a raft of GOP candidates who made a priority out of stopping illegal immigration, has won the presidential nomination of the Republican party?

The answer may be that the politics of immigration has, at least until now, been locked in a kind of status quo ante. Anyone who tries to liberalize immigration laws (as former New York Governor Eliot Spitzer did with his proposal to issue driver's licenses to illegal immigrants) will set off a furious counterreaction. At the same time, anyone whose opposition to illegal immigration appears to border on the obsessive will encounter a brick wall. Yes, McCain won the GOP nomination (a strike against those preoccupied with stopping illegal immigration) but in the process he was forced to jettison his own Senate plan in favor of concentrating on border security first (a strike *for* those preoccupied with stopping illegal immigration).

Among Republican strategists, there are two schools of thought go-

* See, on this point, Yuval Levin's "Fixing Immigration" in COMMENTARY, May 2007.

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ing forward. According to one, any continuation of the GOP's less-than-concealed hostility toward Latino voters might well end by relegating the party to permanent minority status, since Latinos are among the fastest-growing demographic groups in America. According to the other, Latinos will always vote for Democrats over Republicans, so trying to accommodate their demands will ultimately harm the party's message. Which is correct? Riley summarily dismisses a Krikorian-like anti-immigration platform as political "fool's gold." He may be right, but the issue is hard to predict.

WHEN ALL is said and done, what emerges most powerfully from the opposing cases presented by Krikorian and Riley is that where one situates oneself along the spectrum of the immigration debate depends on one's view of America itself—of who we are, and where we are.

Krikorian writes that his book is "not a pessimistic or declinist argument." But in fact it is; threaded throughout *The New Case Against Immigration* is the idea that, unlike in the past, America can no longer incorporate newcomers. Globalization, modernity, and our own failures as a nation have conspired to make legal and illegal immigration a grave and growing threat.

Yet, on empirical grounds alone, this fundamental pessimism conflicts with the reality of modern American life. In the decade between 1995 and 2004, for instance, the number of illegal immigrants roughly doubled. According to the Krikorian thesis, this should have exacted a huge toll on our country's social, civic, economic, and environmental well-being. And yet during that same period, as Yuval Levin and I have documented,* a vast number of social indicators—including the rates of teen pregnancy and sexual activity, binge drinking and smoking, abortion, drug use, education, and divorce—markedly improved, while in areas like welfare and crime, where one might think illegal immigration would have made things much worse, the improvement had the dimensions of a sea-change.

In brief, as our illegal-immigration "problem" has become more acute, our social and civic life has become stronger. The same is true of the economy—which throughout the past two decades, and despite severe challenges, has been the envy of the world. We have witnessed sustained growth, increases in worker productivity and manufacturing activity, low rates of inflation and unemployment, gains in real after-tax incomes, and record-high tax revenues and stock-market gains. Even the slowdowns have been shorter and shallower than in previous decades.

According to Krikorian, the "artificially increased number of people" in America has "eroded, or even wiped out," the progress we have made in dealing with the problem of the environment. But here, too, the sheer magnitude of recent improvements belies his claim. As Gregg Easterbrook summed things up in *Time* a few years ago:

> "Aggregate emissions," the sum of air-pollution categories, have fallen 48 percent since 1970, even though the U.S. population rose 39 percent during that period. . . . Air pollution can decline as the population rises because antipollution technology keeps getting better and because Clean Air Act controls on cars, power plants and factories have been growing stricter for two decades.

IF, MOREOVER, the pessimistic view fails to square with the empirical record on a variety of key issues, it is also at odds with the American creed and the American story. The United States is one of only two nations in the world founded on an idea. (The other is Israel.) In America's case, the founding idea is embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Our liberal democracy is built on the principle that ethnic, cultural, and religious differences can be overcome by a dedication to common ideals, including human equality, social opportunity, and representative government under the rule of law.

That this creed and this story have progressed—sometimes more slowly, sometimes more rapidly, but essentially without fail—ever since America's founding is nothing short of miraculous. To take people from every corner of the earth—people who speak different languages, practice different faiths, embody different histories, and follow different customs—and enable them to cohere into a single nation that is thriving and whole is an unprecedented achievement in human affairs. That is what America has been and what, despite everything, it seems determined to remain.

Obviously this idea of America does not provide guidance on every question of immigration policy. But it does present a useful starting point. One cannot help sensing that it is an idea in whose appeal and durability Krikorian and those who share his perspective have lost confidence. Nor can one help remarking, that, in a book dedicated entirely to the subject of immigration, a reader will search in vain for a single good word about immigrants.

In the final paragraph of his introduction, Krikorian invokes both Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan. There is something unusual in this. As it happens, Lincoln said very little about immigration while President; he had, after all, a Civil War to contend with. We know, however, that in November 1862 he countermanded an order by General Grant to keep Jewish merchants out of Union lines; that he was very friendly with the large German immigrant population in Illinois; and that, to him, America's founding idea was precisely what made it capable of welcoming new immigrants

* "Crime, Drugs, Welfare—and Other Good News," COMMENTARY, December 2007.

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and transforming them into true citizens.

In a speech in the summer of 1858—a speech from which, ironically enough, Krikorian quotes—Lincoln noted that while some Americans could claim a connection by blood to the founding generation, many others had arrived since that time who should, by virtue of their shared ideals, nevertheless be counted as descendants of the founders:

> We have . . . among us perhaps half our people . . . who have come from Europe . . . or whose ancestors have come hither and settled here, finding themselves our equals in all things. If they look back through this history to trace their connection with those days by blood, they find they have none . . . but when they look through that old Declaration of Independence they find that those old men say that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," and then they feel that that moral sentiment taught in that day evidences their relation to those men, that it is the father of all moral principle in them, and that they have a right to claim it as though they were blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh of the men who wrote that Declaration, and so they are.

As for Ronald Reagan, he held a view directly opposed to Krikorian's, both in practical terms—he signed a 1986 bill granting amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants—and philosophically. For Reagan, the point to emphasize was the great and vivifying diversity that immigrants brought to this country, and that flowed into and became as one with the national fabric. Riley quotes Reagan's words:

> We have a statue in New York Harbor . . . of a woman holding a torch of welcome to those who enter our country to become Americans. She has greeted millions upon millions of immigrants to our country. She welcomes them still. She represents our open door. All of the immigrants who came to us brought their own music, literature, customs, and ideas. And the marvelous thing, a thing of which we're proud, is they did not have to relinquish these things in order to fit in. In fact, what they brought to America became American. And this diversity has more than enriched us; it has literally shaped us.

If you believe in this vision of America, you will find the cover of Krikorian's book particularly jarring: a picture of Lady Liberty, her hand not raised up but stretched out to signal "Stop," her torch not just extinguished but absent. She is no longer lifting a lamp beside the golden door; she is instead pulling up the drawbridge to an aging, gated community.

As between that vision of America and Jason Riley's, not to mention Lincoln and Reagan's, I side with Lincoln and Reagan; and so, I believe, do most Americans.

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OBSERVATIONS

America Sorts Itself

Terry Teachout

OF ALL the public statements made by various candidates for the Republican and Democratic presidential nominations, the two most revealing issued from Mike Huckabee and Barack Obama. Last December, Huckabee aired a TV ad in which he declared that "at this time of year . . . what really matters is the celebration of the birth of Christ." Four months later, Obama, speaking at a fund-raising event in San Francisco, said that conservatively inclined working-class voters are "bitter" people who "cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations."

What was noteworthy about these statements was the clarity with which they reflected the cultural chasm that separates the two men who made them—as well as the segments of the electorate to which each was speaking. Huckabee, a Southern Baptist minister turned more-or-less conservative Republican politician, was appealing to evangelical Christians; Obama, a liberal Democrat who grew up in Indonesia and Hawaii and attended Columbia University and Harvard Law School, was appealing to secular up-market urbanites.

In framing their respective statements, each candidate, whether knowingly or not, invoked terms that might have been calculated in advance to antagonize the voters to whom the other was appealing. It is as though both were operating on the assumption that there is no middle ground in American politics. True, it is customary for a candidate to play to his base in the primary season, then tack to the center once he has secured his party's nomination. But the "center" of American politics has been shrinking, and so has the difference between primary and general campaigns. Indeed, it may have become possible for serious candidates to aim their general-election campaigns almost exclusively at their bases—this is the so-called "51-percent strategy"—rather than reaching out to undecided voters.

Up to a point, George W. Bush ran just such a campaign in 2004. If either presidential candidate should do so successfully this year, it will mean that identity politics, in which a voter's political choices are best understood not as a set of rational responses to external circumstances but as a near-reflexive manifestation of his group affiliation, has come to dominate the American political process.

A quarter-century ago, identity-based campaigning was far less common, in part because in their internal composition the two major political parties were not so ideologically consistent as they are today. In 1980 it was possible—just—to be a conservative Democrat or a liberal Republican.

But the change in the political landscape goes deeper than that. Today, a voter's decision to support one candidate over another may well have little to do with that candidate's positions on specific issues. It is, rather, an ideological fashion statement, a declaration that one is a certain kind of person, whose tastes on a wide variety of cultural matters can be reliably inferred

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from his political preferences—and vice-versa. "If you drive a Volvo and do yoga, you are pretty much a Democrat," said Ken Mehlman, who managed President Bush's 2004 presidential campaign. "If you drive a Lincoln or a BMW and you own a gun, you're voting for Bush."

The now-familiar phrases "latte liberal" and "NASCAR conservative" are expressions of this development. So is the widely read satirical web site stuffwhitepeoplelike.com, whose authors catalogue the cultural preferences of urban white liberals:

> [W]hen white people have a nice new car such as a Prius or an Audi station wagon, the fear of losing resale value prevents them from applying more than one sticker. Therefore that one sticker must properly capture the essence of the car and the political views of the driver. The safest and most accepted choice for a sticker is always one that supports a Democratic presidential candidate (Ralph Nader is an acceptable substitute). As of February 2008, white law requires an Obama '08 bumper sticker to be placed on the back of every Prius.

The prevalence of such cultural markers is no laughing matter, however, to the postmodern American presidential candidate for whom—to paraphrase the radical slogan of the 1960's—the political is cultural. To the contrary, it is his bread and butter. In order to put together a winning electoral coalition, he must first of all find out what his kind of people like—and where they live.

IN THE wake of the 2000 election, commentators noted with surprise that the candidacies of George W. Bush and Al Gore had been regionally distinct in their appeal. Here is how I put it in a post-election essay for COMMENTARY:

> Except for Alaska and New Hampshire, all 29 of the states won decisively by Bush are geographically contiguous, forming a vast L-shaped curve that sweeps down from the Rocky Mountains across the Great Plains, then through the Midwest and South. By contrast, except for California and Washington, most of the states won decisively by Gore are bunched tightly around the urban and industrial centers of the Northeast and the Great Lakes. . . . Gore won in urban and suburban America, Bush nearly everywhere else.[1]

I went on to suggest, as others had before me, that the U.S. was splintering into "two geographically and culturally distinct units . . . that are competing for political control of the country as a whole."[2] Moreover, the emergence of these two "nations," I argued, was the result of a long-term "sorting process." The "gradual segregation of the electoral map into two geographically discrete belts" was, as I saw it, the manifestation of a larger disintegration of America's common culture.

That disintegration in turn had been accelerated by the rise of "information-age capitalism," whose sophisticated marketing techniques were now being embraced by a new generation of media-savvy, demographically conscious politicians. The result:

> Today, a young voter who opposes gun control, or supports public-school vouchers, will quickly see that there is no place for him in Democratic Nation, no matter how his parents may have voted in bygone days. So instead of choosing a party out of familial loyalty, as once was generally the case, he will end up choosing it out of cultural convictions—just as he is more likely to settle in a community where his next-door neighbor shares those convictions.

TO THE extent that my 2001 essay was noticed by other commentators, it was mostly dismissed as an exercise in alarmism. Andrew Sullivan, among others, had already contended that the geographical divide between the parties was factitious: "What's that blue [i.e., Democratic] sliver meandering up the Mississippi? Look at the bluish enclaves in New Mexico, Wisconsin, Louisiana, and Tennessee. Check out the red inland counties of California." A year later, David Brooks, while acknowledging that the divide was real, nonetheless claimed that the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 had "neutralized the political and cultural leaders who tend to exploit the differences" between the two nations. Thus, in Brooks's view, "although there are some real differences between Red and Blue America, there is no fundamental conflict. There may be cracks, but there is no chasm."

By 2004, though, the cracks were widening again, and the two-nations thesis had become a staple of political analysis. In a *New York Times* column titled "Age of Political Segregation," Brooks acknowledged that younger "information-age workers" now tended "to cluster in places where people share their cultural, aesthetic, and, as it turns out, political values. . . . Once you've joined a side, the information age makes it easier for you to surround yourself with people like yourself."

Brooks, it seems, had changed his mind after reading a series of articles published in 2004 by Bill Bishop, a reporter for the *Austin American-Statesman*. Drawing on the statistical analysis of Robert G. Cushing, a sociologist at the Uni-

[1] "Republican Nation, Democratic Nation?," January 2001.

[2] For an early analysis of the phenomenon, see Tod Lindberg, "The Broken Arc," in the *Weekly Standard* for November 25, 1996. My own essay was immediately inspired by the work of Michael Barone, who in a pre-election article in *U.S. News & World Report* had observed that while Clinton-era Democrats had made significant gains in the "vast suburban sprawls" of America's major metropolitan areas, the "fast-growing counties beyond metro-edge cities, with [their] family-size subdivisions and megachurches," were becoming "heavily Republican."

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versity of Texas, Bishop had concluded (in Brooks's summary) that

> the number of counties where one party or another has a landslide majority has doubled over the past quarter-century. Whole regions are now solidly Democratic or Republican. Nearly three-quarters of us . . . live in counties that are becoming less [politically] competitive, and many of us find ourselves living in places that are overwhelmingly liberal or overwhelmingly conservative.

The consequence of this self-sorting, according to Brooks, was that "every place becomes more like itself, and the cultural divides between places become stark."

Which brings us to this year's race, in which, as Brooks has noted, the cultural divides have became so sharp that they have been reflected for the first time within the two major parties themselves. Thus, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton competed for the loyalty of a Democratic electorate that turned out to be as deeply split along cultural lines as was the larger voting public, with Obama appealing mainly to blacks and well-to-do urbanites, Clinton to older women and working-class voters. Obama, Brooks wrote in April,

> has won roughly 70 percent of the most-educated counties in the primary states. Clinton has won 90 percent of the least-educated counties. . . . Social identity is everything. Demography is king.

A WEEK AFTER Brooks's latest exercise in cultural demography appeared in the *Times*, Bill Bishop and Robert G. Cushing published *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart*.[3] In this book, an expansion of Bishop's *American-Statesman* articles, the two authors offer exhaustive documentation of their original thesis that Americans "have clustered in communities of sameness . . . whose inhabitants find other Americans to be culturally incomprehensible."

The "communities of sameness" explored by Bishop and Cushing range from the very liberal neighborhoods of South Austin, Texas, to the very Republican county of Okanogan, Washington. In recent years, these communities have grown far more sharply defined in their political and cultural identities—partly because living in a homogeneous community reinforces one's existing attitudes, partly because such communities tend to attract like-minded emigrants.

According to *The Big Sort*:

> [W]e discovered that people who left counties with large numbers of evangelicals rarely moved to counties dominated by Democrats. People who left counties with a high proportion of evangelicals largely moved to counties of like faith. Similarly, we found that when people moved from Republican counties, they were very likely to settle in other Republican counties.

And what has been the result of this culturally driven emigration? Bishop and Cushing claim that today's Americans have put themselves at risk of transforming their country and their culture beyond recognition:

> We have created, and are creating, new institutions distinguished by their isolation and single-mindedness. We have replaced a belief in a nation with a trust in ourselves and our carefully chosen surroundings. . . . [W]e approach public life with the sensibility of customers who are always right.

One of the most striking aspects of *The Big Sort* is that while Bishop, the principal author, is a self-acknowledged liberal, the book scrupulously avoids partisanship, seeking instead to offer an objective description and analysis of the "sorting process" that I sketched in COMMENTARY seven years ago. But the picture it paints is even starker today than it seemed in 2001.

A growing body of social-science research indicates that people who live exclusively or primarily among those with whom they agree on most things are likely to hold more extreme cultural and political opinions. As for the fate of those who do not share the prevailing views of the communities in which they reside, the evidence, according to Bishop and Cushing, is equally clear-cut:

> Nearly 60 years of social-psychological research confirms that as political majorities grow within communities, minorities retreat from public life. Majorities have their beliefs reinforced by seeing and hearing their inclinations locally repeated and enhanced. Self-reinforcing majorities grow larger, while isolated and dispirited minorities shrink.

THAT AMERICANS of different cultural and political inclinations are "sorting" themselves geographically, with each set of inclinations reinforcing the other, now appears to be beyond argument. But what might it be like to live in a country that has sorted itself in this way?

While *The Big Sort* offers anecdotes rather than answers, Bishop's reportage is disturbing in its implications, not least because it suggests that Democrats and Republicans who no longer live together are more likely to demonize one another out of sheer ignorance. Other statistical evidence points to a similar conclusion. In a recent survey cosponsored by the *Economist* and the Hoover Institution, 62 percent of self-identified Democrats described Republicans as "closed-minded," 55 percent as "hypocritical," and only 26 percent as "patriotic." As for the Republicans surveyed, they present a virtual mirror image: 64 percent described Democrats as "hypocritical," 59 percent as "closed-minded,"

[3] Houghton Mifflin, 370 pp., $25.00.

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and only 19 percent as "patriotic."

What such results suggest is that the two political parties will find it increasingly difficult to make common cause on major issues—and that party leaders will be significantly less disposed to try. Indeed, if one party should manage to take control of both Congress and the White House, as the Republicans did in 2002 and the Democrats may do this November, its base-conscious leaders will be all the more likely to adopt a confidently militant line. This is, needless to say, a recipe for legislative paralysis.

All of this casts Barack Obama's widely discussed remarks about the "bitterness" of small-town conservatives, as well as Mike Huckabee's Christmas-for-Christians message, in a different light. A quarter-century ago, no seasoned politician would have dreamed of saying what Obama said, even if he thought it was true. In fact, reporters old enough to remember those days were astonished by Obama's tactlessness. Karen Tumulty, *Time*'s national political correspondent, described it as "a graceless move to characterize an entire demographic group—and vital voting bloc—as irrational and bigoted."

But Tumulty came of age when politicians of both parties still sought to carve their majorities out of the middle of the political spectrum. Not so Obama. He partakes of the postmodern political sensibility, and his Ivy League education and upper-middle-class experience have had the effect of isolating him from the working-class "Reagan Democrats" whom Hillary Clinton courted so assiduously and effectively in the second half of the primary season. By the same token, Mike Huckabee, who grew up in Arkansas and was educated at Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has spent the whole of his life in Red America.

Might the candidacy of John McCain, who at present seems to be appealing to a more demographically diverse cohort of American voters than either Obama or Huckabee, refute the two-nations thesis advanced in *The Big Sort*? Perhaps. But if McCain wins in November, it will almost certainly be with a share of electoral votes disproportionate to his smaller share of the popular vote. And in any case, McCain represents a style of politics more typical of a man born in 1936 than of one born in 1961 (like Obama) or 1955 (like Huckabee).

Unlike John McCain, Obama and Huckabee are identity politicians—and pure products of the Big Sort. For this reason, their otherwise dissimilar ways of thinking may have more to tell us about the rancorous political ways of a country made up of two increasingly separate nations, one whose younger citizens are more and more likely to have known only their own kind.

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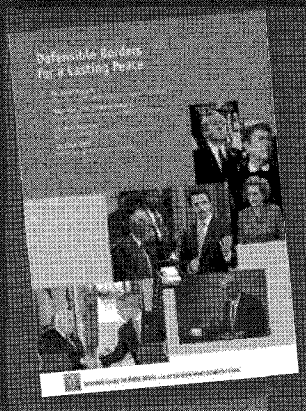

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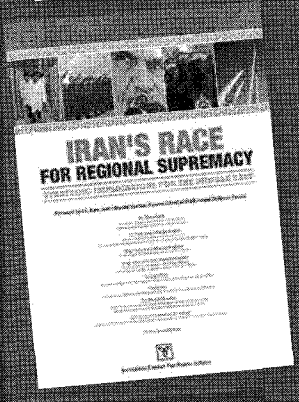

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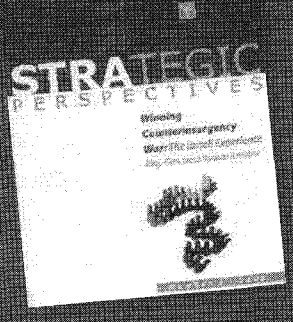

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Books in Review

Saving the GOP

Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream

by Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam

Doubleday. 256 pp. $23.95

Reviewed by Daniel Casse

As the Bush administration, mired in unpopularity, reaches the end of its eight-year run, there is a surfeit of advice on what the Republican party can do to reinvent itself. David Frum's *Comeback* (2007) argues that important elements of the traditional GOP agenda are no longer relevant to current politics. Michael Gerson, formerly President Bush's adviser and speechwriter, suggests in *Heroic Conservatism* (2007) that conservatives need higher, more compassionate ideals. Newt Gingrich, the leading Republican figure in Washington during the 1990's, seems to have given up the ghost entirely; *Real Change*, his most recent book, is a populist manifesto that advocates non-partisan solutions to America's problems.

Now come Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam, young editors at the *Atlantic Monthly*, with another assessment of Republican ills and how to cure them. The authors, not yet out of their twenties, prove to be hard-nosed policy analysts and shrewd political observers. *Grand New Party* offers an entirely original critique of how both liberals and conservatives have misdiagnosed the problems of a key American constituency, and why this failure might present the GOP with an unexpected opportunity.

Unlike most takes on the Republicans, *Grand New Party* focuses on ground more familiar to critics than to supporters of conservative politics: namely, how to develop both a perspective and actual policies that will appeal to working-class Americans. The book is an outgrowth of a much-discussed *Weekly Standard* essay about "Sam's Club Republicans," named for the mammoth discount-shopping meccas run by Wal-Mart. These are the predominantly white, non-urban voters who comprised a vital part of the Roosevelt coalition in the 1930's and 40's and of Nixon's "silent majority" in the 70's, and who came to be known as "Reagan Democrats" in the 80's.

Douthat and Salam describe these voters as "working-class," but, as they quickly point out, that term is no longer necessarily attached to a blue-collar job or a union card. Nor are Sam's Club voters the sort of Depression-era victims depicted in the songs of Woody Guthrie. Rather, they are likely to be health-care workers, office administrators, or government employees, and they are far from destitute: a typical Sam's Club voter owns his own home and has filled it with material comforts unimaginable to previous generations. What makes them an identifiable class—and a class in undeniable trouble—is the lack of a higher education, possession of which has become the most important driver of social and economic status in America.

Politically, the Sam's Club voters do not fit neatly into either party,

Daniel Casse *is a senior director of the White House Writers Group, a Washington, D.C. communications and strategy firm.*

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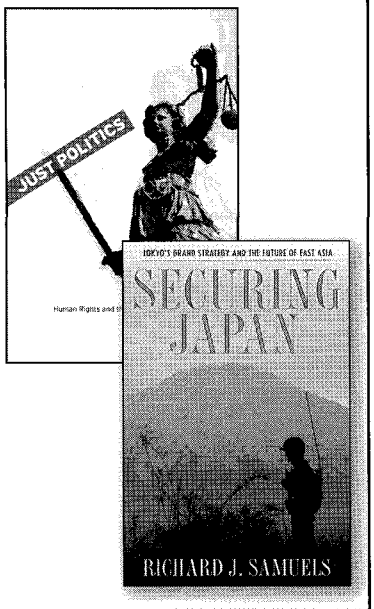

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instead flitting for the last two decades between Democrats and Republicans. For this reason, no doubt, the mainstream media assume that they must be centrists, hungry for "moderate" policies on trade, the environment, and campaign finance. This dovetails with the diagnosis offered by liberals and leftists, who are eager to blame the problems of the working class on free-market policies that have supposedly pandered to entrepreneurs, corporations, and Wall Street.

Thus, Paul Krugman, the economist and *New York Times* columnist, has made a second career out of claiming that corporate malfeasance and inflated executive salaries are the culprits behind our growing "income gap." In his best-selling *What's the Matter With Kansas?* (2004), Thomas Frank goes a step further by suggesting that a conservative political machine has used red-meat issues like guns and abortion to distract these voters from even recognizing that their economic well-being is in decline, thus keeping them from joining the Democratic party. And so forth.

Douthat and Salam agree that the Sam's Club voter is suffering, but they reject such analyses. Sam's Club voters are not marching for European-style universal welfare benefits or more expansive unemployment insurance. Nor have they been hypnotized by conservatives to ignore their own well-being and become right-wing activists. "The poorest Americans *haven't* turned right over recent decades under the influence of those 'hallucinatory' culture-war issues," write Douthat and Salam. "Instead they've turned left, voting for Democrats more reliably than even in the heyday of the Great Society."

As for the "wage gap" argument, the authors point out that what really unsettles the working class is not the salaries at Goldman Sachs but the insecurity of their own lives. According to recent studies, a significant number of working-class Americans have household incomes above $85,000 a year. Their relative affluence, however, has not ameliorated the social instability that characterizes their lives and that manifests itself in higher rates of divorce, out-of-wedlock births, income volatility, and general economic stress. It is true that the wealthiest Americans have seen their incomes soar as compared with the lower-middle class; but the fault lies not in any corporate conspiracy but in the combination of education and experience that increasingly fuels upward mobility.

LIBERAL OBSERVERS, then, have a skewed view of what ails the Sam's Club voter. But Douthat and Salam are even tougher on Republican strategists—who, they state flatly, have fallen out of touch with their own base. The members of today's working class are culturally conservative, church-going, and eager to improve their lot. They should be the spine of the GOP. If they are not, it is because the GOP has given them no reason to be.

For many years, Douthat and Salam write, Republicans have made small government and supply-side tax cuts the pillars of their economic program. The Republican hero has been the small-business owner or entrepreneur who resents government interference in the economy. Such role models, central to Republican speech-making since Reagan, have, however, become irrelevant to the lives of working-class voters, who still need help from the government if they are going to realize the American dream.

How can Republicans reach them? The second half of *Grand New Party* offers a series of proposals, whose common purpose is to help working parents raise children without being forced to make painful economic compromises. The standard liberal response to this dilemma has been universal day care and generous parental leave. To Douthat and Salam, these are really "business-friendly" policies, designed to make

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it easier for people to work, not necessarily family-friendly policies, designed to strengthen the home.

For their part, Douthat and Salam would provide government subsidies to parents who take care of children at home and even pension credits that recognize the dollar value of household work. They would also eliminate the payroll tax for working families and, rather than imposing a minimum wage, offer wage subsidies to employers.

Similar ideas have been kicked around for decades in both conservative and liberal policy circles. But Douthat and Salam's ideas, trained on covering the full spectrum of everyday life, are more imaginative. For example, they endorse a public-school funding mechanism aimed not at reducing class size but at rewarding schools that succeed in attracting students. This would stimulate market competition and ensure that good schools have the resources they need. To fight crime, they propose that the federal government help hire an additional 500,000 police officers in local communities, a move that would have the added effect of creating a source of professional employment for urban males. They would also spend much more on urban roads and highways, a proposal sure to anger anti-sprawl activists but one that, if implemented, might actually reduce the time spent commuting—the bane of many working-class families.

Only the most libertarian reader is likely to find this program objectionable in its entirety, though others will surely object to some aspects of it on budgetary grounds. What Douthat and Salam have done, and have done exceptionally well, is to take on the very issues—child care, health care, government aid—that were once the exclusive preserve of liberal advocates and to devise policies addressing them that promote responsibility, independence, self-respect, and individual advancement. This is no small achievement.

Which is not to say that *Grand New Party* is a flawless work of analysis. At times, the authors wax sentimental over the possibilities of a new era of working-class opportunity. Extolling the old-fashioned virtues of the skilled laborer without a college degree, for example, they call for a greater emphasis on schools teaching craftsmanship. Elsewhere, they envision the reestablishment of tight-knit communities in which the local pharmacist will take time off to teach chemistry in an open community school. They also believe they can revive the spirit of the American frontier by funneling government subsidies to dying rural communities. Such reveries may sound lovely, but they are utopian, and they detract from the tough-minded approach of the book as a whole.

The main trouble with *Grand New Party* lies elsewhere: in the decision of the authors to attempt both a policy analysis and a partisan political strategy in one and the same volume. When it comes to the latter, *Grand New Party* is unpersuasive.

In response to the GOP's growing electoral strength in the 1980's, the Democratic party tried to make itself more appealing to certain tightly defined demographic groups: urban liberals, Jews, blacks, gays, union members, and so on. Pollsters like Stanley Greenberg and Mark Penn, both of whom worked for Bill Clinton, went further by categorizing voters into "single urban environmentalists," "married minivan drivers," and the like. *Grand New Party* assumes that similar techniques will work for the GOP—that is, that a new coalition can be galvanized into formation by means of a list of bite-sized policies for bite-sized constituencies.

There is scant evidence that this is the case. Indeed, the Democratic effort itself proved unsuccessful when Hillary Clinton, guided by Mark Penn, sought to use it to catapult herself to the Democratic nomination.

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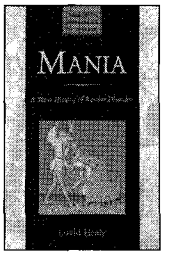

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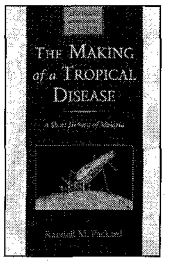

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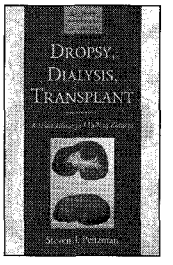

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Consider Douthat and Salam's central notion of appealing to families as a powerful voting bloc. Demographically, the United States has an aging population, and most current polling shows that the older voters become, the less interest they have in supporting policies that help parents and children. Nor, despite the strong case made by Douthat and Salam for a governmental helping hand, are voters in general clamoring for an expansion of government services. A May 2008 survey by Rasmussen Reports found 62 percent of respondents preferring fewer government services, with lower taxes. Nowhere does this book present a realistic political strategy for reversing such sentiments.

The innovative policies proposed by Douthat and Salam might indeed bring about welcome changes for many working-class Americans. To that end, *Grand New Party* can serve as a valuable resource for the next Republican President's domestic-policy team. It will, however, be far less useful as an electoral weapon for this year's Republican presidential candidate.

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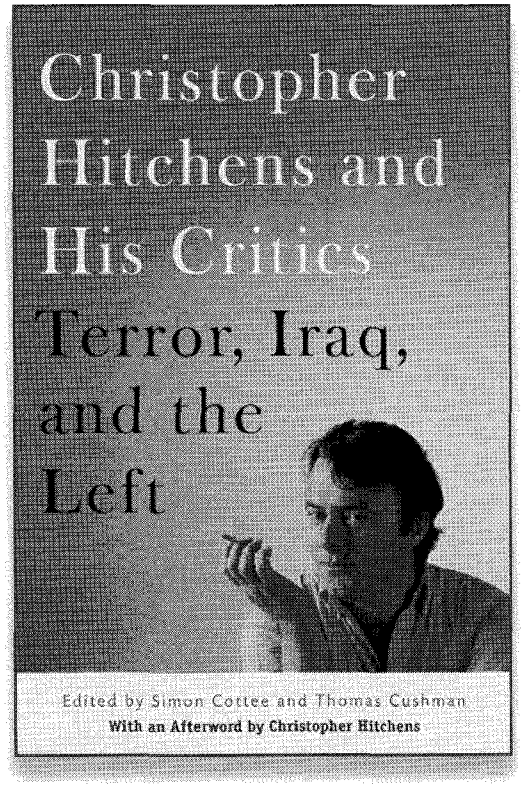
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Chewing the Fat

In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto

by Michael Pollan

Penguin. 256 pp. $21.95

Reviewed by
Edward Azlant

LIKE ROCK 'N' ROLL, today's food culture comes complete with superstar performers, fabled venues and festivals, vast media coverage, breathless critics, big money, and a tower of books. Notable among the authors of such books is Michael Pollan, whose *The Omnivore's Dilemma* was a best-seller in 2006 and whose latest, *In Defense of Food*, is now far up on the charts.

In *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Pollan assumed the seemingly neutral pose of a naturalist to tell a tale of four meals. First and worst was a take-out meal from McDonald's, consumed in the car by Pollan, his wife, and their son as they cruised through Marin County north of San Francisco. Next was a chicken dinner prepared with ingredients purchased at an upscale Whole Foods market. In the third meal, the ingredients came from a grass-based, "sustainable" farm in Virginia, while the fourth, at the apex of Pollan's ascending order, was made from items mostly gathered or killed by the omnivorous Pollan himself.

EDWARD AZLANT, *a new contributor, is a writer living in northern California.*

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It was the "McFrankensteinian" horror of the first meal that, for Pollan, defined the essence of what he sees as our current national eating disorder. The culprit is industrial agriculture, with its factory farming, feedlots, processing, transport, and marketing. The embodiment of the entire system is corn: a patented hybrid used as food, feed, or ingredient in virtually everything we eat. Indeed, corn—along with the petroleum necessary for chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and transport—represents to Pollan nothing less than America's answer to "the agricultural contradictions of capitalism."

But the etiology of the second meal, using ingredients from Whole Foods, was no great improvement. Pollan dubs this "industrial organic"—differing from true organic in that here, too, the ingredients are often mass-produced and delivered from a distance by industrial giants. Meals composed of such ingredients might taste better, but they are not necessarily better for your health or for the earth.

With the third, "pastoral" meal we come closer to heaven. Polyface Farm in Virginia is a "biological," not an industrial system. Its livestock eat no corn and are continuously grazed. Pastures are fertilized with manure. Chickens range free, eating bugs. This, for Pollan, is "nature's logic," not capitalism's, and in it he found much solace, lovingly describing the meal he ate at the farm as a quasi-religious ceremony. Somewhat less breathlessly, he also confides that the farm's products sell for about double the market price, and that the work seems to be performed by the farmer's children and some "interns": hints of a vanity enterprise.

The fourth and final meal was the result of a trip back to an imagined time when vulnerable omnivores had no food culture to guide them. Fortunately, Pollan was able to find some wise men to lead him on a hunt for wild mushrooms and wild pigs, both of which he bagged

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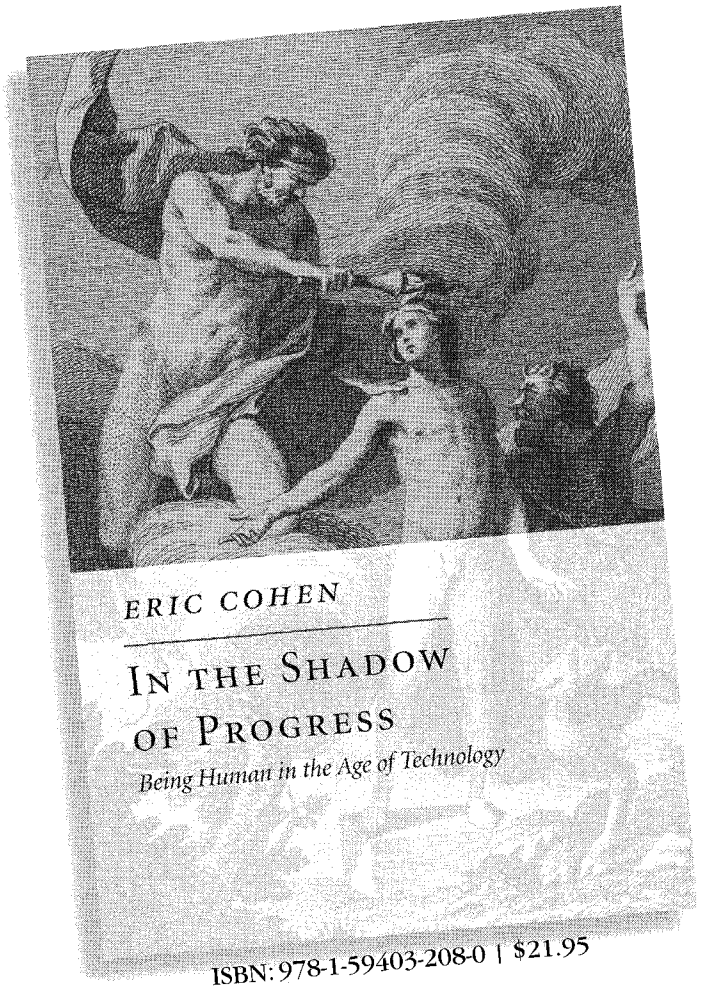

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and prepared along with fresh garden vegetables in a "perfect" repast for his guides and friends. This, too, was a richly ceremonial occasion—in fact, a "secular seder." Pollan wrote, glowingly: "We eat by the grace of nature, not industry, and what we're eating is never more or less than the body of the world."

POLLAN'S NEW book, *In Defense of Food*, is an extension of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* with a few shifts of emphasis. If in the earlier book he pronounced America to be devoid of any food culture at all, here he revises himself: what the U.S. purveys, he claims, is the "Western diet." This is roughly the end-product of the factors he named in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*—i.e., industrialization, processing, and chemicals, their ill effects compounded by too many calories—but now augmented and reinforced by an "official ideology." The name of the ideology is "nutritionism," and it has become his new target.

In Pollan's account, the origins of nutritionism are to be found in a set of goals promulgated by the Food and Drug Administration in 1977. For purposes of regulation and labeling, these identified the nutritional "equivalents" of various ingredients and the foods made from them. The exercise gave rise, in turn, to a "quasi-religious priesthood" of nutritionists, who over the ensuing decades have bequeathed to us an unending series of fads and counter-fads centering on the supposed virtues or deficiencies of carbohydrates, fat, fiber, fish, and so on.

With its shifting claims and ubiquitous and indecipherable labeling, nutritionism is what has kept us chained to the Western diet and the tyranny of the supermarket. How to escape the curse? Pollan urges us to go back to the "social and ecological relationships" of our ancestors. His prescription: avoid exotic ingredients, high-fructose corn syrup, and the middle aisles of the supermarket—the kingdom of canned, jarred, and packaged foods where capitalist processing reigns. Instead, eat real food, and eat less of it; eat slowly; and eat with our families.

LIKE POLLAN'S earlier book, *In Defense of Food* benefits from a likeable authorial presence and a breezy style; it also tenders much common-sense advice about healthy eating. But both books are stuffed with assertions begging scrutiny and weighed down by foolish ideological animadversions.

Thus, Pollan dismisses virtually all of nutritional science as "reductive" and little more than a record of false claims. He accuses nutritionists of complicity in various regulatory and labeling fiascos and of providing cover for "industrial food." Much of this is schismatic pique. Any science-like activity proceeds by breaking its subject into constituent elements (in this case, chemicals, nutrients, and so forth) and by seeking to identify the dynamics between and among them. Pollan himself utilizes this method in singling out and designating such elements as omega-3 and multivitamins.

In any case, the fault for much of today's nutritional huckstering and policing is to be attributed less to the "industrial-food complex" than to hysterias largely created by health-food muckrakers and messiahs. Nor is this a new story. The "organic" crusade, which arose in the 1980's, was itself but the latest set of preachments in a line stretching forward from Sylvester Graham, John Harvey Kellogg, and Adelle Davis to the "macrobiotic" gospels of the 60's. The stink over refined sugar, indeed, played a major role in the switch to Pollan's hated high-fructose corn syrup.

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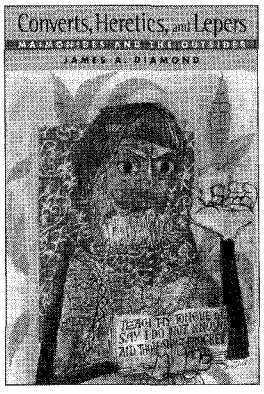

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As for the current "organic" movement itself, many questions remain. What *is* organic: whatever you eat, unless it's gravel? Are the foods that the movement considers truly organic healthier, or better-tasting? Which is more dangerous, nitrogen fertilizer plus modern pesticides or composted animal manure and natural plant disease? Is organic farming necessarily better for the environment? Could organic farming and ranching ever sustain current or future world populations?

Such questions demand to be answered in a measured, objective way, not in a spirit of hype, apocalypse, or cult. But here Pollan falls short. Thus, he cites two locations along Telegraph Avenue in his home town of Berkeley, California: a Whole Foods supermarket and a community garden at People's Park, the former an example of "industrial organic" and the latter an originally "pastoral" operation that he points to as an inspiration for today's organic-food movement.

A little history: the community garden in question, occupying a large lot near the Berkeley campus, was "liberated" in 1969 by radicals and since then has been held a neglected hostage. In its current condition it is somewhere between a seedy slum park, an open-air drug market, and a homeless encampment minus the usual freeway overpass. Instead of anything grown there, you would do better to eat Chicken McNuggets.

Then there is the Whole Foods store, whose pre-history is again instructive. Before it was Whole Foods, this was the flagship store of Co-Op Markets, a local outgrowth of a Midwestern enterprise owned and run through committees of customers. When I worked there as a checkout clerk in the 1960's, the owner/customers were a righteously demanding lot who believed the millennium had arrived and that, on pain of tantrum, they were entitled to have available whatever they wanted, whether exotic foods or politically motivated boycotts.

All told, the operation leaked money, and many employees sensed it was only a matter of time before the circus folded. The genius of its replacement, Whole Foods, lies in the free-market ability to make a buck by giving customers what they desire. It would serve Pollan well to consider why both People's Park and Co-Op Markets cratered.

Another relevant fact: the combination of seed, fertilizer, insecticide, and transport, the devils in Pollan's tale of industrial perfidy, are the angels of a very different tale. This is the Green Revolution, which started in the 1940's in Mexico and moved on to India, Pakistan, and beyond. It was led by scientists like Norman Borlaug who, supported by American foundations, created "su-

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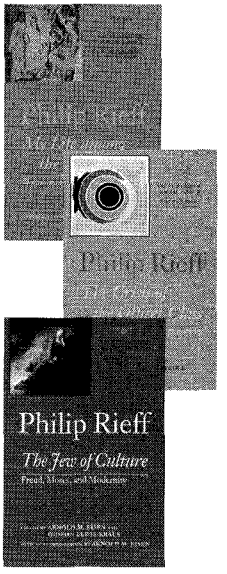

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per seeds" of corn, wheat, and rice that, coupled with the use of nitrogen fertilizer, pesticides, and irrigation, vastly increased yields.

It is said that the Green Revolution, a key opening chapter in globalization, fed the entire world's population increase and that Borlaug saved a billion lives. Although aspects of it have been regularly attacked by leftists and environmentalists, many of these critics, as Borlaug has observed, have "never experienced the physical sensation of hunger." This is a crucial deficiency, for hunger, starvation, and famine have stalked human history and are to the discussion of eating what scarcity is to economics: namely, the baseline fact.

The economist Amartya Sen has observed that famines are unlikely to occur in the presence of a functioning democracy and a working system of distribution—which is to say, a market economy and long-distance transport. Pollan, however, regards both of these as among the fundamental causes of our "national eating disorder." In his view, the food industry reaps its profits largely by owning the patents for processing and then putting its brand on the results. Since there is no money in oatmeal, only in Cheerios, inevitably the processing-and-marketing side of things grows at the expense of the healthy side.

This is a weird view of the economics of the food industry—one that cannot explain the great success of, for instance, Trader Joe's, which sells generic or house-branded commodities. In fact, large profit margins in food are more likely to accrue through the provision of multiple options and convenience. Convenience means, among other things, getting stuff closer to the table, which in turn means preparation—very profitable indeed. Although Pollan wants us to keep to the edges of the supermarket with the produce and fresh meat, the edges these days are increasingly the home of long banks of prepared food, making the modern grocery store a hybrid less with a cornfield than with a restaurant. That, along with the expansion in organic and "artisanal" foods and wines, so loved by foodies like Pollan, is where the bread is.

Pollan's blindness to the actual workings of the market is of a piece with his casual likening of American mass industrialized agriculture to the disastrous "collective industrial agriculture" of the Soviet Union. This is a window on history that he was ill-advised to open, disclosing as it does a failure to recognize the difference between market and command economies. The harnessing of agriculture to social engineering—Pollan's own temptations in this area range from getting the family around the dinner table to reforming school lunches to creating a grand movement against the globalized economy—is a nightmare from another century.

IN A LESS programmatic vein, Pollan's favored solutions invoke the glories of "slow food" and the wisdom of one's grandmother. As remedies to the alleged problems of a fast-food nation addicted to "McFrankensteinian" junk, this is as tendentious and adolescent as his beau ideal of the organic hunter-gatherer tracking wild mushrooms and wild pigs for a "secular seder." Worse, "McFrankensteinian junk" is an empty definition of America's fast-food culture.

There are about 40,000 Chinese restaurants in the United States, more than the combined total of McDonald's, Burger King, and Kentucky Fried Chicken. To these we can add fast-food Mexican, Japanese, Italian, Thai, Greek, Indian, barbecue, and soul restaurants, many of them mom-and-pop operations. And if to these we then add

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all the fast-food carts and stalls and courts and holes-in-the-wall everywhere throughout the world, we get a picture of "fast food" as the way ordinary active people eat—and of the "slow-food movement" as little more than the latest upscale shopping theme.

Pollan is currently the director of a program in science and environmental journalism at Berkeley's graduate school of journalism. His work is fairly typical of "committed" journalism, which regularly fits into the "underdog," "conspiracy," or "apocalypse" template. It is past time for real scientists to reclaim the discourse.

On the Ground

Moment of Truth in Iraq: How a New "Greatest Generation" of American Soldiers is Turning Defeat and Disaster into Victory and Hope

by Michael Yon

Vigilante. 256 pp. $29.95

Reviewed by
Jonathan Foreman

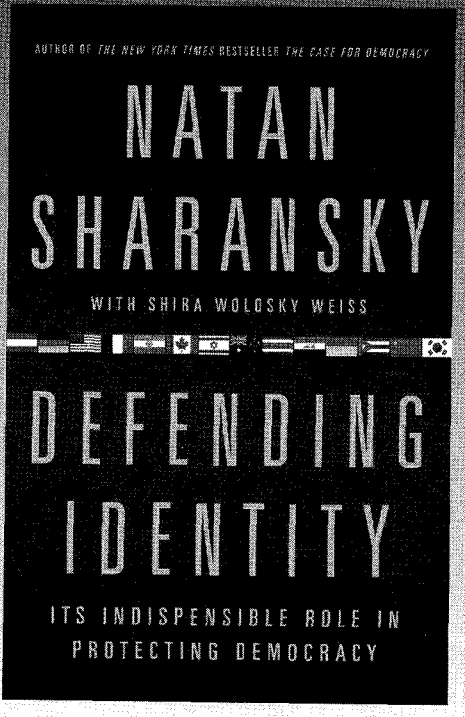
"If you are going on a combat mission and soldiers have not cleaned all their windows to a sparkle, do not go with them. Soldiers with dirty windows are not watching for tiny wires in the road, nor are they scanning rooftops."

These are the memorable words of Michael Yon, a former Green Beret-turned-businessman-turned-journalist who has redefined what it means to be a war correspondent through the innovative work he has done reporting on the Iraq conflict, and the innovative way he has presented that work to a public hungry for a new kind of reportage.

Yon began "embedding" himself with American and British units for long stretches of time in 2005, after taking a trip to Iraq the previous year following the death in combat of two of his friends. It was the stunning determination of Iraqi citizens to vote in their first national election in January 2005 that convinced him the goings-on inside Iraq were drastically different from what could be learned through the dispatches of reporters working there. "When an entire press corps could be completely surprised by events happening in plain sight," Yon recalls of the election, "something was fundamentally wrong

Jonathan Foreman, *who was an embedded reporter in Iraq in 2003 and 2005, is deputy editor of* Standpoint, *a new magazine in Britain.*

"The enemy's will is strong because his identity is strong."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with how the war was being reported. And fought."

In the years since, Yon has seen vastly more military action than any staff correspondent for any American or European newspaper, television channel, or magazine. But he is not himself in the employ of any institution. Rather, Yon calls himself an "independent journalist." He has presented his reportage on the Internet, in what he has dubbed an "online magazine" that features both his dispatches and his remarkable photographs. He earns his living and pays for his travel entirely through contributions from readers, who donate online by depositing money into a virtual "tip jar."

Yon does not pretend to an objectivity he does not possess. Nor does he view from a distance the efforts of the American and British soldiers with whom he spends months at a time. Half-journalist, half-soldier, he is not neutral about which side he is on. Though capable of criticizing the military at large as well as individual fighting men, he identifies completely with the troops and their mission. "We are in trouble," he notes at one point in a startling but typical use of the first person plural, "but we have a great general."

IT WAS no doubt the enthusiasm of military families for Yon's project that helped propel his new book, *Moment of Truth in Iraq*, into the top ten on Amazon.com within days of its publication. The book collects his most important dispatches and photographs, arranged as a narrative of his time in Iraq so far. It thereby demonstrates that he has no rival as a source of on-the-ground knowledge, and that one cannot fully understand the conflict in that country without reading or viewing his work.

Among other highlights, *Moment of Truth* includes on the cover Yon's now-celebrated photograph of an American major cradling an infant fatally wounded when a suicide bomber drove a car into a crowd of children taking candy from an American patrol. Also reproduced here are a sequence of photographs and a harrowing description of an incident during which a lieutenant colonel, with a bullet in his thigh, ended up fighting hand-to-hand with the man who shot him. Yon relates how he himself picked up a rifle to help rescue the officer, only to make things worse when the shots he fired hit a propane canister.

Elsewhere, Yon narrates the story of an otherwise ignored massacre of villagers by al Qaeda; takes the reader on a gripping, panoramic tour of the battle of Baquba in 2008—the largest battle in Iraq since the retaking of Falluja at the end of 2004; and movingly describes the clever, graceful way an American military supervisor arrested a senior Iraqi police officer who, having helped pacify the town of Hit in Anbar province, proceeded to alienate its inhabitants by his corruption and abuse of power. Another chapter details a delicate mission in which U.S. soldiers accompanied the Sunni mayor of Baquba, formerly dominated by al Qaeda, on a trip to the Shiite-controlled Ministry of Trade in Baghdad in an effort to restore food shipments to the city.

YON'S LENGTHY periods with the troops over the past three years have provided him with a unique perspective. He has visited wider swaths of the country than most journalists barricaded in Baghdad hotels or compounds have ever even considered. As a result, he has witnessed first-hand the evolution of American military strategy and tactics and the transformation of the U.S. Army and Marines into an experienced counterinsurgency force. As his stories build, one after another, it becomes very clear that American troops have developed exactly the right combination of tact, courage, and military prowess to conduct a counterinsurgency extremely well. These are the soldiers and marines, representing the best of America, who inspire the loyalty and emulation of the Iraqis they are serving.

Some of Yon's most illuminating insights are buried in passing observations about matters that he seems to take for granted but that will come as a surprise to readers whose information derives principally from the mainstream media. Thus, he notes offhandedly that insurgents frequently use hospital ambulances to ferry groups of gunmen away from the scene of an ambush—a detail that tells a great deal about the nature of the enemy. Similarly, he observes that terrorists tend to attack whenever a new unit takes over a base or a fresh division assumes responsibility for Baghdad. This is something of which most correspondents of papers like the *Washington Post* or *New York Times* are themselves generally unaware, which is why they are likely to assume, wrongly, that an uptick in violence means that the American military has lost control, or that Iraqis have been provoked into joining the insurgency. In fact, such terrorist offensives against newly installed or untried troops make elementary tactical sense.

Reading *Moment of Truth in Iraq*, one is repeatedly struck by such throwaway remarks—and by how little of the fabric of the war has been conveyed to the American people. Why do Army colonels and generals turn out to be so good at helping Iraqi mayors run their cities? Because they have already run army bases, which are essen-

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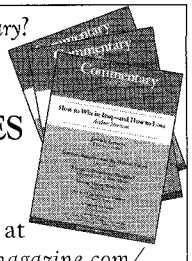

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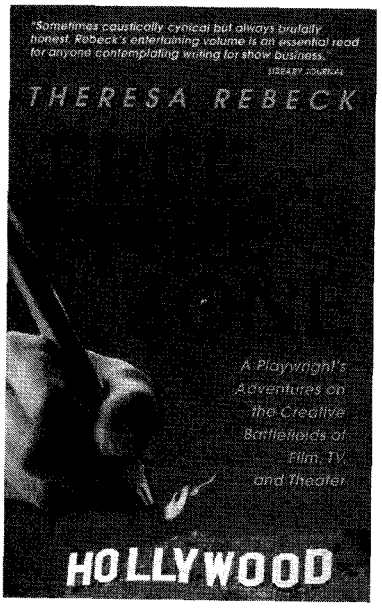
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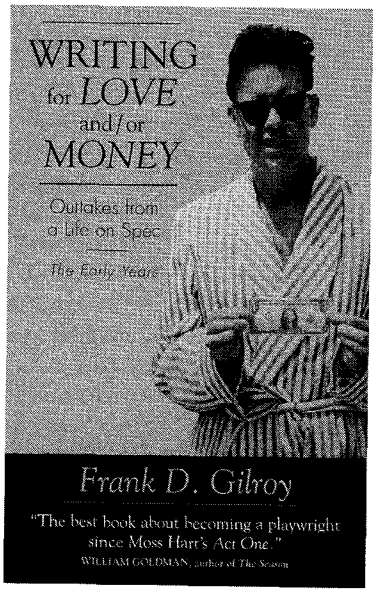
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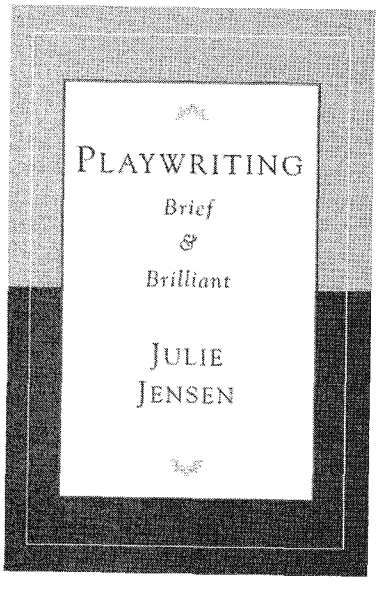

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tially small city-states. Why are dogs of such great importance to the life of combat units that many soldiers will defy regulations to look after strays? Because dogs guard the perimeter at night, and because "a dog is instant morale"; some, indeed, end up being adopted and taken back home to the U.S.

DESPITE HIS intimate familiarity with the American war effort, and despite the patriotic passion that directs his writing, Yon has had his run-ins with the military media bureaucracy. He was refused permission to become re-embedded in 2006, supposedly because he lacked an association with a major news organization; not until a caustic piece on the subject appeared in the *Weekly Standard* did the Pentagon change its mind.

Even when a journalistic tour has been cleared through Washington, Yon points out, a reporter can spend days in the Green Zone waiting for the necessary credentials to come through. "This inauspicious entrée to the war can set a foul tone even for the most fair-minded," he writes bitingly. "If, after five years of war, a plastic badge with photo and fingerprint requires days of wasted time, what's happening with the rest of the war?"

The chief weaknesses of *Moment of Truth* are its disorganized structure and Yon's occasional tendency to wear his combat credentials with excessive swagger. And even those who share Yon's general point of view might quibble with aspects of his perspective, such as his unquestioning faith in the effectiveness of special forces. But his prose is simple and swift-moving, and he avoids or translates the legion of acronyms that so dominate military language.

This is a necessary book, and the "moment of truth" of which Yon speaks is now. We are, he believes, at a decisive point in the war. Regardless of the political climate in the United States, what is needed to defeat the insurgents in their last great urban holdout of Mosul is not fewer troops, but more.

That is unlikely to happen. But no one who reads *Moment of Truth in Iraq*—it should be a required text for, among others, public-information officers and would-be war correspondents—can fail to agree that Yon's counsel on this and other points deserves to be taken with the utmost seriousness.

The Artist as Critic

The Journey Abandoned: The Unfinished Novel

by Lionel Trilling

Columbia. 256 pp. $26.95

Reviewed by
Sam Munson

ALTHOUGH HIS name no longer commands the recognition it once did, and although the critical principles that motivated his life's work have largely fallen out of fashion, Lionel Trilling (1905-1975) remains a singular and powerful figure in the intellectual life of 20th-century America. He was, famously, the first Jew to have received a permanent appointment in the English department of Columbia University, where over the decades he trained generations of students in the subtleties of literature and, more consequentially, the intersection of literature with moral thought and with the recalcitrant facts of history and politics. The same wide-ranging preoccupations imbued his own writings with a complexity and richness rarely equaled even among the endlessly gifted members of his milieu, the group now known as the "New York intellectuals." Out of fashion though Trilling's corpus may be, it remains a testament to an era when serious intellectual and ideological debate still enjoyed high billing among the thinking classes.

It was the singularly capacious form of the novel that served Trilling as a special point of fascination and the occasion for some of his most penetrating insights into society and culture. And, like many impassioned students of fiction, from Edmund Wilson to James Wood, he also attempted to write his own. In addition to his early and formidable reputation as a critic, he established a name for himself as a writer of stories, the best-known (and best) of which is the academic parable "Of This Time, Of That Place" (1943). In 1947, he published *The Middle of the Journey*, a novel notorious for its fictional portrayal of Whittaker Chambers, the former Communist—and acquaintance of Trilling's—who in the following year would emerge to testify against Alger Hiss and thereby inaugurate one of the most bitterly contested political debates in postwar American history.

The Middle of the Journey is a book eerily prescient of that still-reverberating struggle: a book concerned with the fatal delusions of utopian radicalism and, no less, with the related delusions of what Trilling called the liberal imagination. This, in his definition, was a sensibility properly dedicated to the enhancement of political freedom and the human spirit but cripplingly unmindful of the tragic limitations inherent in every human institution and indeed in human existence. *The Middle of the Journey* took as its test case the nexus of attraction between Stalinism and fellow-traveling liberalism.

After the publication of *The Middle of the Journey*, Trilling devoted himself with even greater fervor to his pursuits as a critic. His first and perhaps most influential collection, *The Liberal Imagination*, was pub-

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lished in 1950; it had been preceded by books on Matthew Arnold and E.M. Forster and would be followed by a study of Freud and by an outpouring of essays, including in this magazine, collected under titles like *The Opposing Self* (1955), *A Gathering of Fugitives* (1956), *Beyond Culture* (1965), and the posthumous *Speaking of Literature and Society* (1980). But no further fiction appeared in his lifetime.

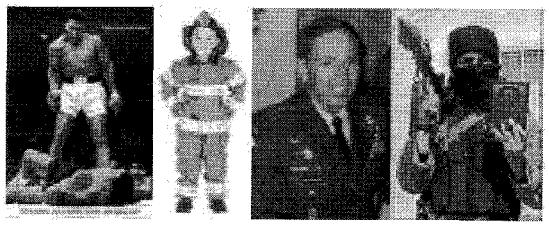
Now a previously unknown work *has* appeared. Its title, *The Journey Abandoned*, a clever play on *The Middle of the Journey*, has been bestowed by its discoverer, editor, and annotator, Geraldine Murphy, who has published widely on Trilling and other members of his circle. Thanks to her labors, we have been given a window both onto Trilling as a working artist and onto what may have led him to leave off the writing of fiction.

The Journey Abandoned, which Murphy dates to the late 40's and early 50's, comprises 24 chapters running to 153 pages in print. It follows the fortunes of Vincent Hammell, a shabby-genteel young writer from the Midwest who is attempting to scale the heights of literary accomplishment. Vincent is hampered in this quest by a premature feeling of sterility, by an inescapable attachment to bourgeois life, and by the suspicion that his talent is unequal to his ambitions. But he has nevertheless attracted the attention of Harold Outram, a once-brilliant critic and upscale journalist now occupying a prestigious post as a grants administrator. Outram offers Hammell a project: serving as biographer to the reclusive Jorris Buxton, another ex-literary man who is now (improbably) a world-renowned physicist.

What follows are the opening skirmishes of a murky battle over Buxton, into which Vincent learns he has been conscripted in order to immortalize the old man while at the same time safeguarding the comfort and peace of his seclusion. Against him in this enterprise are arrayed a woman named Geraldine Post and her protégée Perdita Aiken. (From his notes on the work, also uncovered by Murphy, it would appear that Trilling was intrigued by a similar entanglement that had beset the 19th-century British poet Walter Savage Landor.) But just as the machinations surrounding Buxton begin to reveal themselves to both Vincent and the reader, Trilling's manuscript cuts off.

It is tempting to ascribe this abrupt termination to a simple loss of authorial steam. But a closer look at *The Journey Abandoned*—and at Trilling's own running commentary on it, which Murphy has included—suggests deeper roots. Near the beginning of the novel, Vincent parts ways with a close friend who has

What Do These People All Have In Common?



NOTHING

Except to the Washington Post,
Which for the Last Several Months
Has Called Palestinian Terrorists
"Fighters"

The Post Has Even Been Altering Wire Service Reports to Change the Word "Militants" to "Fighters"

But Only When Israelis Are The Targets

What Will They Call Them Next?
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made a sarcastic remark about Vincent's alleged moral purity. The narrator reads his hero's mind:

> What a year ago would have been kidding, now reverberated as malice. They would meet again, but the friendship was finished. Vincent did not reply. He was too concerned with the meaning of the moment. He understood it fully and he marked it to himself by thinking in clear, articulate words, "My youth is over."

This passage is itself clear and articulate; but do we, its readers, experience Vincent in the act of thinking, or is the author doing all the thinking for him? Similarly, here is Vincent enduring his mentor Outram's pitiless dissection of an essay he has prepared on the duties of the writer:

> [A] wave of misery swept over Vincent. Yes, all the irony and all the magic had gone from his poor little essay. He had been dealing, after all, with facts. The man across the table was taking them as facts. Indeed, the man across the table was living proof of the reality of facts. "No," Vincent heard himself saying, "I am quite a common type, really quite ordinary. I want to live the life, not be the thing."

Again well said; and again the same question obtrudes. An unwillingness to let his story and characters speak for themselves pervades even those scenes in which Trilling catches Vincent playing tennis, or swimming, or drinking cocktails. The flesh-and-blood figure into whose mind and heart we are meant to look as into a crucible of moral conscience comes to us missing both flesh and blood; he is merely a place holder.

IN HIS notes, Trilling seems indeed to be holding a conversation with himself, half pep-talk, half chastisement, about the progress and the defects of his incomplete manuscript. "Up to now," goes one such note,

> though reasonably dramatic, the story has been going along the ground. So long a stretch of taxiing must argue a long novel. We have to face up to this: the pace of what has occupied us until now can be the introduction only to a long story. We must give up all craven hope of making it short. If it is to be short, it must begin with Vincent's arrival at Outram's. But that isn't what you want. So best make up your mind to length.

This is a rare spectacle: a critical intelligence of the first rank turned in upon itself, examining, in a mixture of ruthlessness and self-defense, the product of its own exertions. Trilling's eye is so acute that it discloses not only the weakness at the core of his novelistic conception but also the probable cause of its abortion and, it may be conjectured, of his decision not to try his hand at fiction again.

The entirety of Trilling's work as a critic suggests he possessed a mind too fine for false comfort to violate it. But the failure—there is no other word for it—of *The Journey Abandoned* does offer an instructive instance of how different are the real talents of the critic and the novelist. One is analytical, the other synthetic; one is exigent and refining, the other generative and messy. For this reason, though it seems paradoxical, Trilling's admirers can take heart from this dispiriting book. Though he failed as a novelist, he failed for the best possible reason, leaving *The Journey Abandoned* among his papers without further comment. That long silence itself constituted an act of the most discerning criticism.

The Grandmother

Golda

by Elinor Burkett

HarperCollins. 483 pp. $27.95

Reviewed by
Dean Godson

GOLDA MEIR (1898-1978) is not quite Israel's forgotten premier, but inside the borders of the Jewish state she is perhaps the least spoken of. This is arguably the last outcome anyone might have envisaged in her heyday. A little over three decades ago, she was one of the most celebrated figures in the world. Although initially a stop-gap Labor prime minister after Levi Eshkol died in 1969, she was, at the age of seventy-one, no Millard Fillmore or Chester Arthur. Charles de Gaulle, who normally stood stock-

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still in a room until others came up to him, would cross the floor to greet her; Anne Bancroft and Ingrid Bergman rushed to portray her on stage and screen; and her autobiography, *My Life* (1975), was a runaway bestseller.

"Our Golda," as Israelis called her, played the role of the Jewish grandmother to the hilt—loving, fiercely protective, iron-willed, and manipulative all at once. She had loads of charm and an unfailing ability to strike the right populist note for Jewish audiences without alienating Gentiles. "I understand the Arabs want to wipe us out," she would say in her best folksy manner, "but do they really expect us to cooperate?"

As the journalist Elinor Burkett notes in this new biography:

> Perhaps because of her age, her sarcastic wit charmed when it might have offended coming out of the ruby red lips of a woman in a lithe young body. The package was perfect, from her sensible shoes, frumpy dresses, and swollen ankles to her old-fashioned handbag and omnipresent Chesterfields. She managed to translate her warts—prosaic warts with which so many could identify—into reassuring virtues.

ALTHOUGH HER name may have lost its luster, that can hardly detract from the drama of Golda's life, which is always worth retelling and is on the whole told well by Burkett. It began as a classic story of Jewish escape to America from poverty and pogrom in late-19th-century Russia. Then, by way of a girlhood in Milwaukee, her American sojourn became but the prelude to her *aliyah* to the Holy Land in the 1920's. She had battled parents with conventional and ill-judged ideas about what she was destined for. ("You could be a very good housekeeper," offered her mother. "But a clever woman you'll never be.") Although she married early, Zionism was the only love that ever really engaged her, and she was soon effectively separated from her husband. In later years her children had to attend party meetings in order to see her: she noticed them only as she conducted a head count of those voting in favor of her motions.

It is no less instructive to recall the role Golda played in many of the seminal events in the development of the state of Israel: her part in the creation of its national-insurance system; her status as one of the few really competent English speakers in the late 1940's and early 1950's, a skill that enabled her, with the help of American friends, to become Israel's preeminent fund-raiser; her outreach, during her tenure as the country's longest-serving foreign minister, to the newly independent nations of black Africa, an initiative later tragically aborted by the Arab oil pressures after the 1973 Yom Kippur war.

But that conflict, which took place during her tenure as prime minister, brings us back to why Golda has become something of a nonperson in her own country. The reason is simple: the Yom Kippur war and its aftermath triggered a massive retrospective reassessment of the nation's leadership and its values. In particular, Golda was judged to be emblematic of the hubris of the immediate post-1967 era—an era of alleged lost chances to make peace with the Arabs and of the entrenchment of an occupation that many in the Israeli elite increasingly thought was rotting the nation from within. Yitzhak Rabin summarized the mood of the time when he observed early in 1973 that Golda, although enjoying "better boundaries than King David," had failed to seize this propitious moment for deal-making.

In other words, Golda has become a sort of scapegoat for the sins of a whole society, or, perhaps, a reminder of a former self that many Israelis now want to forget. As Burkett rightly observes:

> Golda wore the sheen of triumphant Israel in the days before that triumph became fashionably suspect and radiated moral certainty at a time when to be sure of one's morals was still honorable.

There are ironies here. On the Palestinian question, Golda has become much too right-wing for contemporary tastes, especially in her supposed denial of the existence of a Palestinian nation. But, conversely, in her socio-economic views she would now be regarded as far too collectivist—very much Old rather than New Left. The machines of the Histadrut trade union and the Mapai party, of which she was an integral part and product, were at times downright Sovietological in their practice. In a telling passage in this book, the Left-libertarian Shulamit Aloni recalls the time "when I stood up at a meeting and started to talk about something and began by saying 'I think.' Golda interrupted and chastised me. 'There is no I think,' she said. 'There is only *we* think.'"

ELINOR BURKETT has produced a useful account of Meir's life, and her book has real virtues. First and foremost, it rescues Meir from the relative obscurity into which she has fallen, reminding readers of episodes that were well known at the time but many of which have been long forgotten. *Golda* is also unpretentious, and mercifully light on psychobabble—reflecting, perhaps, its subject's own lack of introspection.

But there are also serious shortcomings, not all of which are the author's fault. One of them has to do with the relatively small amount of fresh oral testimony that can be obtained. It is striking how many of the *dramatis personae* of Meir's premiership are no longer with us or are unable to talk. The list includes most of the senior generals of the Yom Kippur war, who were only in their mid-40's at the time: Haim Bar Lev, David Elazar, Shmuel Gonen, Ariel Sharon, and Aharon Yariv. Of the key military figures of the war,

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"One Land for Two Peoples"

Is it a solution to the Arab/Israeli conflict or a recipe for disaster?

For decades, the declared thrust of the Palestinians has been their desire of having their own state – in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and in the Gaza Strip. Now, a new idea has taken hold and is propagated in national media: a binational state, encompassing those territories and "Israel proper." The slogan is "One Land for Two Peoples."

What are the facts?

Review of history: The Arabs have launched four major wars against Israel, at the end of which Israel remained in possession of all the lands west of the Jordan River, the undivided city of Jerusalem, the vast Sinai, the Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip. In what was in all likelihood a major act of folly, but in order to attain peace with Egypt, Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt. But the peace with Egypt is the coldest imaginable.

Thus, having been unable to defeat Israel in war and unable to wear it down by their "intifadas," the Arabs had to think up something new in order to destroy Israel. And they did indeed come up with something. According to the late and unlamented Yasser Arafat, the most important weapon of the Arabs is the "Arab womb," the motto being: "If we can't defeat them in war, let's outbreed them." And that is exactly what would happen if there ever were a "binational" state. There can be little doubt that, within a generation or less, the Arabs would have outbred their Jewish fellow citizens and would have become the majority in the country. They would thus have accomplished what they were unable to attain by any other means, namely the destruction of the Jewish state.

Artificial countries: With the exception of Egypt, all the countries of the Middle East are artificial creations. After World War I, England and France carved up the Ottoman Empire, with England retaining what are now Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and Iraq, and France being in possession of what are now Syria and Lebanon.

In 1917, the Balfour Declaration, proclaimed by the British mandatory power, established all of Palestine – east and west of the Jordan River – as the reconstituted homeland for the Jewish people. This was ratified by the 52 countries of the League of Nations. Insistence that these are Arab lands and that the Jews are "occupiers" is a notion that is fairly new. But it has been repeated so often and for so long that most of the world has come to believe it. But it has no basis in fact at all. It is a myth.

If Israel were ever to consent to the creation of a binational state, how would it work out? To get the answer, one only needs to go next door to Lebanon. In order to provide a safe haven for the Maronite Christians, the French carved out the artificial state of Lebanon. Within just one generation, the population ratio had begun to change in favor of the Muslims. Strife broke out, which ultimately culminated in a bloody civil war that lasted for close to ten years and in which scores of thousands died. Can anybody really believe that, given the mortal hatred of the Muslims against the Jews, things would be any different in Israel/Palestine? Of course not! A bloody civil war would be the inevitable result.

> "The Palestinians, just as the over one million Arabs now living in Israel with full rights as citizens, could be part of Israel, with full autonomy and with their own internal governance..."

Created as a Jewish state: Israel was created as a Jewish state by the will of the nations of the world and by the brain and brawn of the Jewish people. There is no reason why the Israelis would turn their country over to those who are their declared mortal enemies. Do the Turks plan to establish a binational state with the Kurds (or do the Iranians or Iraqis, for that matter)? Do the Spaniards consider a binational state with the Basques? Do the Chinese propose the formation of a binational state with the Tibetans? Of course not. Why, therefore, should Israel even consider sharing its country with those whose never-changing agenda is its destruction? Why should Israel, one of the most advanced countries in the world in virtually every field of endeavor, make itself hostage to those who live in backwardness and ignorance and who are guided by religious fanaticism? Israel was founded to be the Jewish homeland and it will never acquiesce to its own destruction by allowing itself to become a binational state.

A binational state is a non-starter and, realistically, a Palestinian state in any portion of Judea/Samaria and Gaza (even in the unlikely case that the Israelis were ever willing to concede it) would not be viable. What then is the possible solution to this enduring problem? The Palestinians, just as the over one million Arabs now living in Israel with full rights as citizens, could be part of Israel, with full autonomy and with their own internal governance (something that the Kurds would give anything to attain). If they were unhappy with that solution they would be at liberty to migrate to any of the over twenty Arab countries that, one would hope, would welcome them with open arms.

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only three survive: Yitzhak Hofi of the northern command, Eli Zeira, the ill-fated head of military intelligence, and Israel Lior, Meir's military secretary. Burkett says she could gain access to none of them. Despite her repeated efforts, Shimon Peres, too, declined to speak.

Nor does Burkett have a command of Hebrew, which means she could not read Zeira's or Lior's memoirs. This is a serious if common failing when writing books about the Jewish state: despite the massive international interest in Israeli affairs, little of the most interesting literature is available in English.

These deficiencies take their toll. Burkett ably recounts such episodes as the internal recriminations in the Israeli Labor party after the 1973 war, and in general she does well in bringing out the paradoxes of Golda: the ardent party factionalist who demanded absurdly high levels of personal and political loyalty but who nonetheless brought Moshe Dayan (the key figure in a rival split-away faction of Mapai) into her inner councils and stuck with him to the point of self-destruction; the grandmother of the nation who enjoyed little in the way of a sustained intimate relationship with her own grandchildren; the liberated woman who did surprisingly little for the advancement of other women.

Yet the big questions of her premiership remain unanswered. Why did Golda cling to Dayan for so long? Why, in September 1973, did she ignore the warning of King Hussein of Jordan, who flew his own helicopter to a Mossad safe house to tell the leader of Israel, a country with which his kingdom was still at war, that it would soon be attacked by Egypt and Syria? Why, despite her high reputation in America, did she seem to have so few cards to play in Washington during the crises of the Yom Kippur war and its aftermath?

SHOULD WE care about any of this now? Yes: a case can be made that Golda's tenure in office defined the moral and political parameters within which all Israeli governments have operated since her time. After all, if her government failed to take the risks for peace that it should have taken, and thereby became responsible for the deaths of 2,500 Israelis in the 1973 war, does that not impose a burden upon every subsequent government to travel "the extra mile" to avoid war, even if the price to be paid is very high indeed?

But what if this interpretation—by now, the predominant narrative of the years 1967-73—is based upon an inaccurate reading of history? Burkett quotes a remark of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's widow to an Israeli newspaper in 1989:

> I do not agree with those among us and among you who assert today that Sadat tried to achieve a real peace before 1973. Sadat needed one more war in order to win and enter into negotiations from a position of strength.

The trouble with so much Israeli introspection and even self-flagellation over 1973 is that, until such time as historians obtain genuine access to the archives of Egypt and Syria, it will remain impossible to obtain a full picture of what really happened.

Golda's premiership was a turning point in another way as well. Although Arab *fedayeen* had engaged in terrorism both before and after the creation of the state, Meir was the first Israeli prime minister to contend with large-scale international terrorist "spectaculars" that were themselves a form of armed propaganda intended for global consumption. In deed and especially in speech, she responded with a crispness and moral clarity that no successor has matched. Israel desperately needs those skills on the international scene today, as the Jewish state half-heartedly fights a rearguard action against the latest third-world campaign of delegitimation.

A master of PR, Meir also understood its limitations. As she told a private gathering in New York on her first visit to the United States as prime minister: "If we have to have a choice between being dead and pitied and being alive with a bad image, we'd rather be alive with a bad image." She was no genius, and she made some dreadful errors, but she had huge reserves of common sense and she understood two large, related things: first, the enduring nature of Arab hostility to the Zionist enterprise; second, the vulnerability of that enterprise. Although this book constitutes a renewed start, Golda still awaits a truly full-scale biography.

No Big Deal?

The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade

by Gerard J. DeGroot

Harvard. 528 pp. $29.95

Reviewed by
Kay S. Hymowitz

AS THE punning title of this book suggests, Gerard DeGroot would like to do for history what Barack Obama wants to do for politics—to lead people past the rancor and myth-making of a lightning-rod decade. If the presidential candidate insists that we ought to quit our obsession with a time when the majority of today's voting-age Americans were either too young to consider inhaling or not yet even born, the historian insists that there was less to the battles of the age than may meet the eye.

KAY S. HYMOWITZ, *a contributing editor of* City Journal, *is the author of* Liberation's Children *and* Marriage and Caste in America.

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DeGroot has some intriguing credentials for the job. An American-born professor of modern history at St. Andrews in Scotland, a little older than Obama but too young to have been draftable for Vietnam, he is the gimlet-eyed author of *The Bomb: A Life* (2004) and *The Dark Side of the Moon: The Magnificent Madness of the American Lunar Quest* (2006). He also has an unusual idea about how to address the subject of the 60's. Resisting the "temptation to impose order," he wants to create a "kaleidoscope" rather than a conventional narrative. In other words, he means to write history, 60's-style.

DeGroot's kaleidoscope takes the form of several dozen brief essays, more or less chronologically arranged, on subjects ranging from iconic events like the two marches on Washington to almost forgotten episodes in Asia and Africa to frequently ignored countercurrents like William F. Buckley, Jr.'s creation of the Young Americans for Freedom. In an opening chapter titled "Premonitions," for example, he includes not only the required essay on the birth-control pill but also one on the election and overthrow of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, another on the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* obscenity trial in England, and yet another on the invention of the transistor in 1947, which would soon put a radio, often playing music by obscure black artists, in every teen bedroom, thus fueling both a generation gap and sympathy for the soon-to-be-born American civil-rights movement.

In conventional histories, the 60's begin with the hope-filled election of John F. Kennedy. Count DeGroot a skeptic. From the first, he argues, JFK's youthful appeal was a carefully constructed myth. His family football games and "suntan," a side-effect of the steroids he took for Addison's disease, hid his poor health; his picture-perfect family disguised his sordid womanizing; his idealistic speechifying masked a hard-nosed militarism that led to the Bay of Pigs invasion and a futile expansion of the Vietnam war. Television helped to sell this handsome and charismatic man, as it would permanently freeze in the public mind the images of his 1963 assassination.

In fact, DeGroot spies the influence of visual media in many of the major events of the 1960's. In the very early part of the decade, lunch-counter sit-ins and Freedom Rides testing a Supreme Court ban on segregation in interstate transportation got some public attention. But Southern blacks were frustrated with the slow pace of change. By 1963, when the struggle came to Birmingham, Alabama, black leaders had grasped the media potential of Bull Connor's "billy clubs, snarling dogs, and water cannons." Henceforth, writes DeGroot, protests were "carefully stage-managed in order to provoke the most violent response."

The tactic worked. Public shock led some Southern cities to pass preemptive de-segregation laws, Northern whites to donate heavily to civil-rights organizations, and Kennedy to propose what would become the 1964 Civil Rights Bill. But, as Martin Luther King, Jr., worried, the presence of TV cameras would also incite darker, mob-like impulses. Already in 1963, when a quarter of a million protesters marched on Washington, D.C., radicals like Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and the future Congressman John Lewis were muttering about having to kowtow to white liberals.

Within a year, King's principle of nonviolence had become an anachronism as blacks rioted in New York, Rochester, and Philadelphia. King's 1968 murder further fueled the thuggery that was corrupting black protest, as H. Rap Brown, Eldridge Cleaver, and the Black Panthers grabbed the microphones. "You better get a gun," Brown taunted. "Violence is necessary—it is as American as cherry pie."

DeGroot sees similar preening—and similarly destructive potential—at work in the American wing of the international student- protest movement. The inaugural Port Huron statement of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1962 revealed utter cluelessness about the country that the newly formed organization proclaimed it "had a right" to revolutionize. In an essay on Che Guevara, DeGroot excoriates student radicals for making up "a fairy tale starring Castro and Che," turning a blind eye to the latter's ineptitude and the former's criminality. An essay on the Prague Spring of 1968 illustrates the monumental gap separating the 165,000 Soviet soldiers and 4,600 tanks that greeted Czech dissidents and the allegedly horrifying government "machine" conjured up by America's homegrown rebels.

Although DeGroot is sympathetic to a number of student complaints, and draws a distinction between showboat radicals like Tom Hayden and serious activists like Mario Savio, the leader of the Free Speech movement at Berkeley, he writes with special harshness about the late-60's American radicals who transmuted criticism into an incoherent urge to "smash the system." Perhaps inevitably, their rejection of liberalism, reason, and middle-class respectability veered into nihilism and violence. The Hippies who poured into Haight Ashbury may have seemed harmless enough at first, but their carelessness eventually led to the immiseration of untold numbers of young runaways turned hookers and suicides. The SDS splinter group, the Weathermen, professed admiration for the psychopath Charles Manson; its experiments with bomb-making, which led to an infamous explosion in a New York townhouse in 1970, marked a fitting end to 60's-style political revolutionism.

By contrast, what tends to draw DeGroot's tolerant approval is the cultural or "lifestyle" rebellions of

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the 60's. He has an appreciative essay about the British designer Mary Quant for bringing a youthful sexiness to the gray, postwar British streets. He views criticisms of the sexual revolution as overwrought, contending that most boomer men and women were not especially promiscuous. And he is charmed by the "whimsy" of Amsterdam's Provo movement whose antics nevertheless set the stage for Holland's eventual legalization of drugs and prostitution.

Despite the decade's drama, DeGroot finishes with something like a shrug. "The 60's has been invested with far too much uniqueness," he writes. The decade was "neither unfamiliar nor all that special." Nor did it accomplish anything like what its latter-day celebrators claim for it. Defining the period through the prism of their own obsessions, people have singled out the wrong things about an era whose most notable political outcome, he concludes, was the ascendance of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

AS THIS summary may suggest, *The Sixties Unplugged* is an uneven book, full of fresh insight and arresting detail on the one hand, afflicted by an evasive capriciousness on the other. The difficulty stems in large part from DeGroot's experiment in history-telling. Traditionally, the historian tries to make order out of the flux of events, to impose meaning on the past's apparent randomness. DeGroot, however, intends to mirror the disorder of history, so as to bring readers closer to the truth of a decade that "lacked coherent logic."

This leads to the irony that *The Sixties Unplugged* best succeeds when, in its own terms, it most fails. DeGroot can be very good when he allows or encourages patterns to emerge. A case in point is his various forays into the student protest movement in Germany, France, Mexico, Holland, England, the U.S., and China. Even as these give a sense of global forces that transcend individual action and local politics, they also clarify crucial national distinctions.

Thus, DeGroot's essay on the Cultural Revolution as it unfolded in Guangxi province exposes the viciousness of Red Guard students who poured boiling water over teachers, beat others with nail-spiked clubs, and murdered infants and the elderly. The mayhem alarmed even Mao, who tried to purge the madness by sending four million young people into the countryside to live among the peasantry, in the process insuring a generation of uneducated, de-moralized citizens. This is a well-told horror story on its own; set next to essays on American protesters prattling about the heroism of Mao and threatening their own elders with "Up against the wall, motherf___ers!," it is revelatory.

For careful readers, DeGroot also evokes another, less widely discussed theme of the decade: the growing political and cultural power of mass media, especially in the U.S. If it has become a cliché that market capitalism transformed Che Guevara from a revolutionary into a face on a t-shirt, DeGroot's essays imply something more subtle. This is that television and sophisticated advertising techniques encouraged tendencies toward superficiality and irrational hero worship.

The decade began with the selling of "the product named Kennedy." Throughout the period, both venerable civil-rights leaders and unsavory radicals figured out how to make sure the whole world was watching. Increasingly, imagery and sensationalism drove politics, just as politics entwined itself with the aesthetics of mass culture. Che's visage might have made some marketers rich; more striking is the fact that a Latin American revolutionary with, at best, an ambiguous legacy, who also happened to have died at a young, camera-friendly age, was embraced by the public because he "produced good posters."

UNFORTUNATELY, DeGroot keeps this and other themes far too implicit. His decision to write "kaleidoscopic history" is not just frustrating to readers who naturally expect writers to synthesize and interpret their material. It is also an affectation. Inevitably, even while pretending he is letting randomness speak for itself, DeGroot edits and chooses.

His discussion of the June 1967 Six-Day war is a particularly egregious example. Yes, this was a history-making event, and it took place during the decade of the 1960's. Yet DeGroot's essay does not explain the war's connection with any of the other global events in his book, including the two that bracket it: the famine in Biafra and the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Why Biafra? For that matter, why the war in the Middle East? Since DeGroot's essay on the latter includes the bizarrely reflexive observation that Israel's "embattled image was a carefully constructed myth," and that the country "welcomed war," the reader is left with the impression that this author's kaleidoscope sometimes functions simply as a tool for expressing his otherwise undefended prejudices.

DeGroot concludes that the 60's were not unique, that this was just "an era of magnificent futility." Ironically, his book proves the opposite. If nothing else, the 60's set out to undermine traditional forms of structure and order. Without it, no historian would ever have confused formlessness with scholarship.

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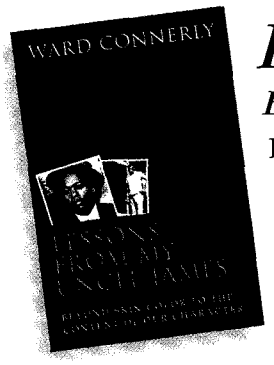

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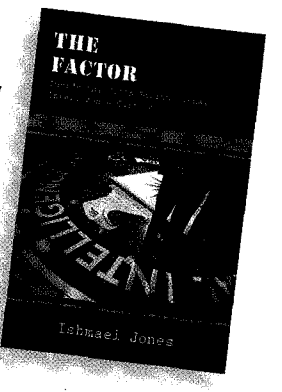

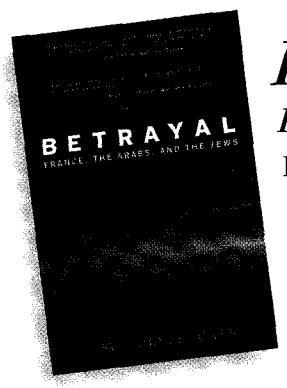

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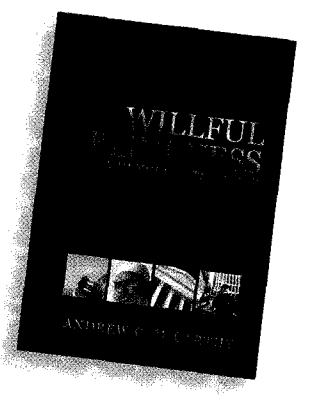

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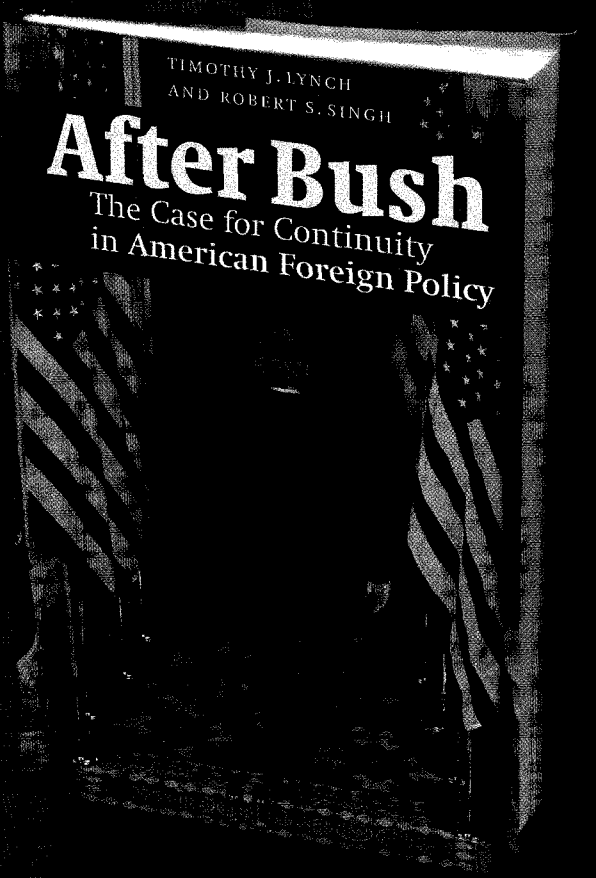

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